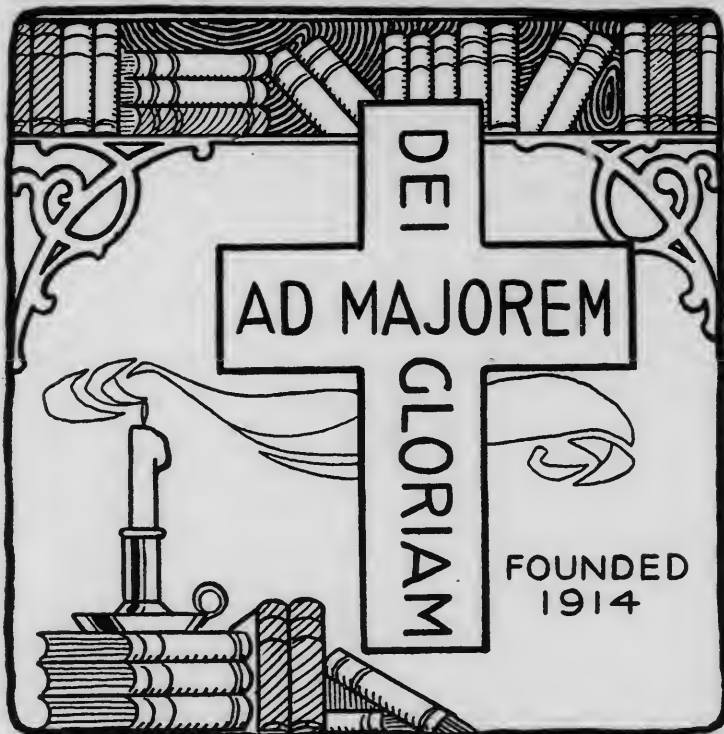


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IN
JOHN WESLEY'S DAY.

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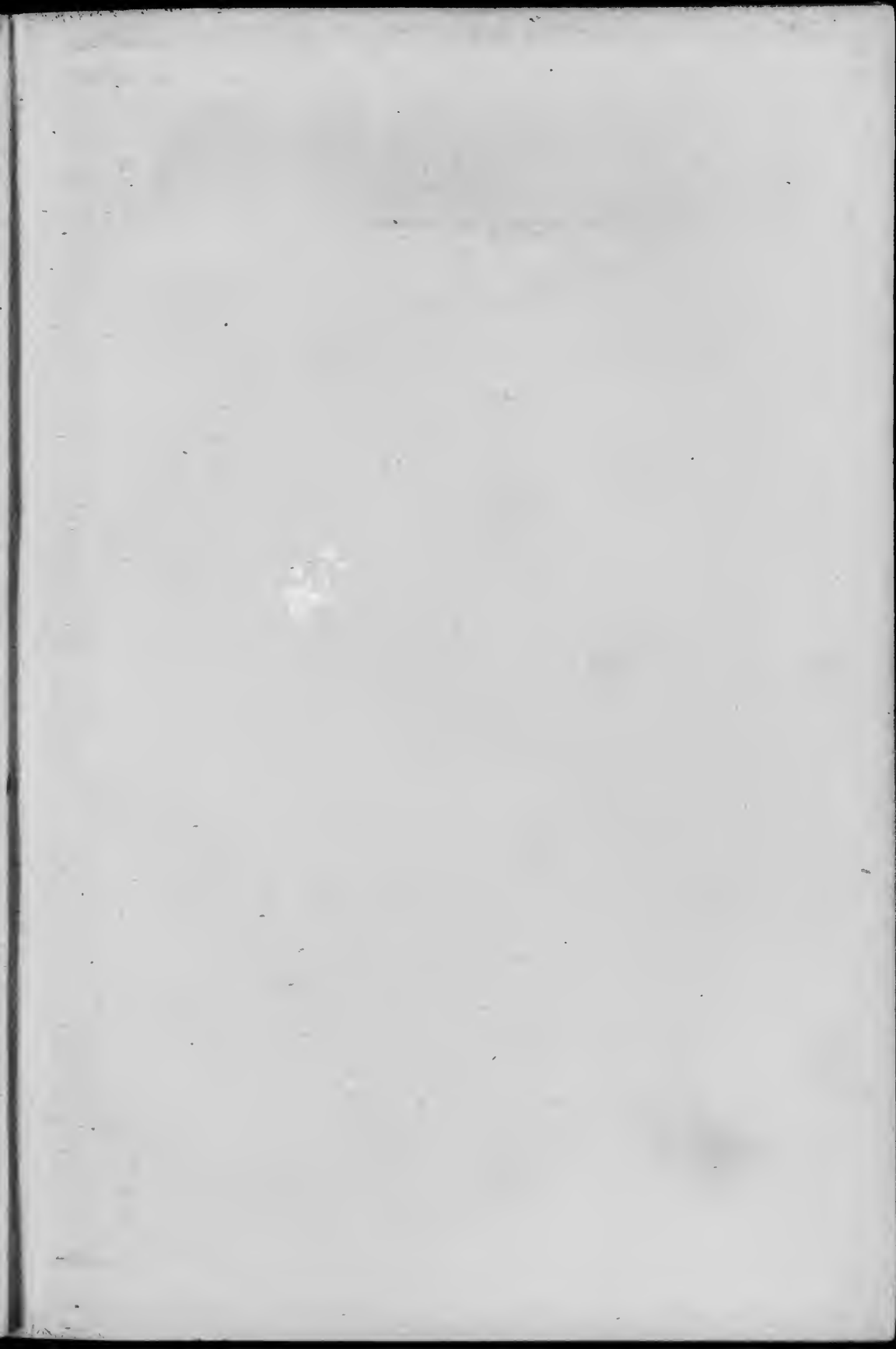


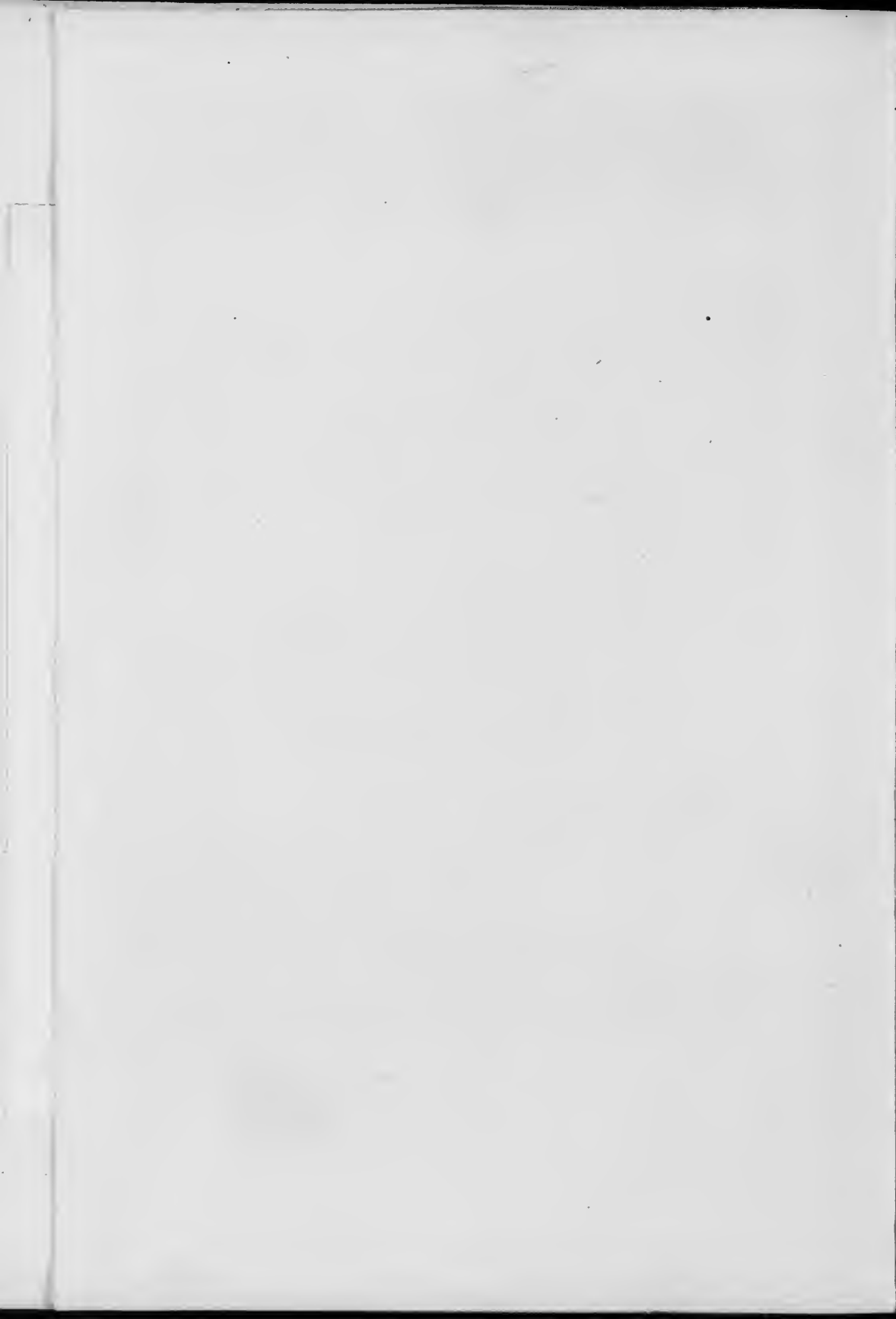
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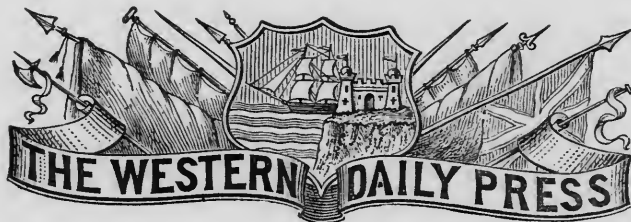


Rev. L. Egerton
with the Author's
Kind regards.

BRISTOL METHODISM
IN
JOHN WESLEY'S DAY.

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BRISTOL METHODISM

IN

JOHN WESLEY'S DAY,

WITH

Monographs of the Early Methodist Preachers.

BY

JOHN S. PAWLYN.

"And all the city was moved, and the people ran together."

"By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted."

ACTS xxi. 30. PROV. xi. 11.

BRISTOL:

PUBLISHED BY W. C. HEMMONS, ST. STEPHEN'S AVENUE:

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And by all Booksellers.

1577

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DEDICATED

TO

ALFRED POINTON, ESQ.,

MY

ESTEEMED AND FAITHFUL

FRIEND.

Wes. 75

P R E F A C E.

THE early history of Methodism is more closely connected with Bristol than with any other city in the world. There—its distinctively aggressive work commenced; its earliest triumphs were achieved; its first sanctuary was erected; and, excepting London, its first Society was formed.

Ascertaining that no history of Bristol Methodism in a separate form had ever been published, I ventured on the task. In pursuing it I have found a congenial toil,—Bristol, beyond all other places, being endeared to me by close family associations, and, by its having been the sphere of my earliest ministry.

BRISTOL METHODISM in the following pages stands prominently forth, but the information they contain will be found to fill a much wider sphere: the work, in fact, is a picture, limned by an imperfect hand, of Methodism from its origin to the death of Wesley—its foreground filled with the City of the Avon, and its perspective reaching far.

The materials for this work have been derived from the standard books of Methodist history, and from other sources of information. Though carried very rapidly through the press, amid the demand of other and arduous duties, no pains have been spared to insure the accuracy of its contents.

May it redound to the honour of Him whose hand hath traced our history; and call forth renewed allegiance to the Church of our fathers and our Faith.

BIRMINGHAM, JULY, 1877.

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BRISTOL METHODISM

IN

JOHN WESLEY'S DAY.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY HISTORY.

Introduction of Christianity into Bristol—Monastic institutions—Religious Reformers—Decline of Protestantism—Condition of the Churches and Country in the Early Part of the Eighteenth Century.

THE city of Bristol stands second to none, save perhaps London, York, and Oxford, in the religious interest attached to its history. Ancient traditions ascribe the introduction of Christianity to a period soon after the commencement of the Christian era. Stately churches, according to Seyer,* may have shadowed the Clifton camp of the Romans and the huts of the conquered Celts; but more reliable authority traces its origin to Anglo-Saxon times.

Soon after the Norman conquest the Benedictine monks established a priory, where now stands St. James's church; and the Canons regular of St. Augustine, an abbey, a portion

* Vide "Seyer's" Memoirs of Bristol.

of which continues in the Cathedral of College Green. The religious Mendicant Orders—Dominicans, Carmelites, and Franciscans followed suit; and with them came the Knights Templars of St. John, who erected a church on the site of that whose leaning tower has told for centuries of the swampy marsh in which it first was built. These religious Orders were subsequently suppressed, but their record still remains in the saintly patronymics of its numerous churches and parishes.

The doctrines of the Reformation were proclaimed in Bristol at an early period. John Purney, the curate of John Wycliffe, preached there, and seeing that Wycliffe was the Prebend of the Collegiate Church of Westbury, in the immediate neighbourhood, it is more than probable that the great reformer himself often published in Bristol the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The preaching of the pre-reformation reformers so far prevailed, that as early as 1498 severe persecution raged. Many were apprehended for heresy, for which some were burnt, and some "abjured to bear faggots"—that is, they were condemned to carry a faggot to some appointed place and to wear the badge thereof embroidered on their sleeves as a sign of perpetual infamy. Among the noble men condemned to bear the faggot for heresy was George Wishart, a Scottish preacher, who "set forth his lecture in St. Nicholas' Church in Bristol"—George Wishart, who seven years later in 1545, gloriously sealed his witness with his blood at St Andrew's, in Scotland, by order of Cardinal Beaton.

The Reformation, began in Bristol by Wycliffe's curate if not actually by himself, was forwarded by the preaching of William Tyndale the translator, and "honest Hugh Latimer." Early in the sixteenth century, Tyndale often preached in its

public streets, and in a large meadow called the St. Austin's Green ; Latimer also, in the churches of St. Nicholas, the Black Friars, and St. Thomas, aroused the wrath of the monks and the wonder of the multitude.

Henry VIII. having abolished its religious orders, created Bristol a Protestant bishopric. In Mary's reign, Popery was re-established, and on St. Michael's Hill, on the spot where Highbury Chapel now stands, five martyrs, named Richard Shepton, Edward Sharpe, Richard Sharpe, Thomas Hale, and Thomas Benion, were burnt to death.

The history of Dissent in Bristol is full of interest. The Independents held public services, first, during the Commonwealth in the house of Scroop, the governor of the Castle. The Baptist Nonconformists used a large room in the Dolphin Inn (an ancient tavern standing in the thoroughfare which now bears its name), removing from thence in 1671 to premises on the site of the present Broadmead Baptist Chapel—the chapel immortalised by the eloquence of Robert Hall. The tenets of the Quakers were introduced by George Fox and a few of his followers in 1654 ; their first meeting-house being erected a few years later in Rosemary Lane, on the site of the old Black Friar's monastery.

After the Restoration, the Bristol Dissenters suffered great persecution. The infamous Conventicle and Five-mile Acts were passed and enforced by Gilbert Ironside, the bishop of the Bristol diocese, and Guy Carleton his successor, with merciless severity. Their sanctuaries were broken into, their property destroyed, and pastors and people dragged before the city officials, only to be amerced in ruinous fines, or to languish in loathsome dungeons. Thus, in his prime, perished in the common gaol, William Thompson, the first appointed Independent minister—thus also perished many other faithful

ones until the Revolution overthrew the Stuart tyranny, and restored to every man his long defrauded birthright—religious liberty.

The age in which Wesley and his coadjutors commenced their work was one of great spiritual indifference and sin. The House of Stuart had long given place to the House of Hanover; but the orgies of Whitehall and the irreligion and immorality which swept like a tornado over the land soon after the Restoration, had left their desolating tracks.

In arms, Marlborough made England's name renowned; in science and literature the genius of Newton, Steele, Swift, Parnell, Pope, and Young, made it "the Augustan age;" but all this was insufficient to uplift the land from religious darkness and moral misery. The masses of the people were grossly ignorant and degraded. The educated, corrupted by the prurience of Dryden, Fielding, and Congreve the dramatist, openly indulged in indecencies which now would be intolerable; or beguiled by the infidel works of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Hobbs, laughed at religion as an idle dream.

And this growing ungodliness the Established and Nonconformist churches were powerless to arrest. These, save one here and there, were slumbering in indifference, or themselves suffering from the prevailing plague. Nothing could be more desponding than the confessions made about this time by the leading ministers. Dr. Isaac Watts mourns over "the decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of men," and calls upon the faithful to "use all efforts for the recovery of dying religion in the world." Bishop Burnet laments the ignorance of the clergy and sees "imminent ruin hanging over the church and by consequence over the whole Reformation." "It is come," says Butler, afterwards Bishop of Bristol, "I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons, that

Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were, by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.”* With this confession of Bishop Butler, agrees the statement of Archbishop Secker, his predecessor in the Bristol diocese, “It is natural,” he says, in his published Charges, to “think those evils the greatest which we feel ourselves, and therefore mistakes are easily made in comparing one age with another; yet, in this we cannot be mistaken, that an open and professed disregard for religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the present age: that this evil has grown to a great height in the metropolis of the nation; is daily spreading through every part of it, and bad in itself, as any can be, must of necessity bring in all others after it. Indeed, it hath already brought in such dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world, and such profligate intemperance and fearlessness of committing crimes in the lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal. And God knows, far from stopping, it receives through the ill designs of some persons and the inconsiderateness of others, a continued increase. Christianity is now ridiculed and railed at with very little reserve, and the searchers of it without any at all.”

Such was the condition of the land when the Methodists commenced their ministry; but the darkest hour of night is that which ushers in the dawn.

* Butler's Advertisement to Analogy—May 1736.

CHAPTER II.

CONSECRATION AND COMMENCEMENT.

Whitefield's Ordination and earliest ministry—Conversion of the Wesleys—Pre-Methodist Societies—Remarkable Love Feast—Whitefield opposed in Bristol—He commences Field Preaching to the Kingswood Colliers—Wonderful popularity—Lays the foundation stone of Kingswood School—Adieu.

GEORGE Whitefield paid his first notable visit to Bristol early in 1736. Healed in soul, he there sought strength of body. Ere his conversion, so great had been his disquietude and so ascetic his habits under a sense of sin, he had been brought near to the gates of death.

During his stay in Bristol, he met Dr. Benson, Bishop of Gloucester, who proffered him ordination. He prepared himself for its solemnities by fasting and much prayer, and, when on June 20th the prelate's hands were laid upon his head, he devoted himself unreservedly to an apostolic life. His first sermon revealed his extraordinary powers. It was preached in the church of St. Mary de Crypt, Gloucester, the place of his baptism. Fifteen of his hearers, Dr. Benson heard, were driven mad; the good bishop only hoped that their madness might be permanent, and gave the preacher—poor enough in pocket though princely in eloquence—five

guineas to help him on his way. Returning to the "Holy Club" at Oxford, he renewed his wonted labours and took his bachelor's degree.

John Wesley at that time was in Georgia, and, in response to his earnest solicitation, Whitefield resolved to join him, and hastened to Bristol to bid farewell to his friends. There, preaching from day to day, his holy oratory moved the city with wonderment. The people blessed him as he passed along the streets. They crowded the churches; in their eagerness to hear even climbing upon the roofs, and when his farewell words were spoken, their excited feelings broke forth in tears and sobs and lamentations. Returning to London, the scenes of Bristol were re-enacted, until early in 1738, followed by the prayers of multitudes, he sailed for Savannah.

Almost before Whitefield had lost sight of his native shores, Wesley had greeted them on his return from Georgia. Entering the metropolis he found it filled with the praises of his friend; but his own soul was sad; for though in labours most abundant he had not yet the conscious knowledge of Divine reconciliation. Though it tarried, the long looked for blessing came. Taught the more perfect way of salvation by Peter Böhler, and other metropolitan Moravians, Charles Wesley found peace on May 21st, 1738, and three days after John shared in his brother's joy.

Soon after his conversion, Wesley visited Germany, where, being instructed by Count Zinzendorf, and beholding the saintly lives of the Moravian brethren at Marienborn and Herrnhut, he was more fully fitted for his great vocation. Charles Wesley meantime continued in London preaching with new found fervour and wonderful success. Converts were multiplied; but the excitement quickly awakened opposition, insomuch that the churches were closed against him, and by the

authority of the churchwardens he was ejected from the curacy of Islington. All things were working for one common end, and both providence and grace were qualifying them for their appointed tasks. Long ere the advent of Methodism, there were agencies at work of a kindred character, which prepared its way and afforded the first basis of its evangelical operations. As early as 1667, two London clergymen, Dr. Horneck and Mr. Smithes (the "Lord's Day lecturer, of Cornhill"), encouraged by Bishop Hopkins, established religious "Societies" within the Established Church, for the cultivation of personal piety and practical philanthropy among the people. They were formed in London, Bristol, and other important centres, and accomplished invaluable good. Declining in course of years in number and influence, and becoming disassociated from the Establishment, they were resuscitated by the Moravians, and to them the Wesleys and Whitefield often went; finding in their services the most ample provisions for the hunger of their souls, and the most congenial field for the putting forth of their energies. It was in a "Society meeting" in Aldersgate Street, that Wesley found the long sought knowledge of salvation; and at a love feast held by the "Society of Fetter Lane," about sixty being present, the evangelists were, so to speak, divinely consecrated for their peculiar work. "Had a love feast with our friends in Fetter Lane," so writes Whitefield under date of January 1, 1739, "and spent the whole night in close prayer, psalms and thanksgiving." Wesley's journal is more explicit:—"About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out

with one voice, 'We praise thee, O God ; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.' " Thus with prayer and pæans of praise they began the year. Five days later the Wesleys, Whitefield, and four other Methodist clergymen held a conference at Islington, and, having spent much of the night in mutual counsel and devotion, they parted with a full conviction that God was about to do great things.

Commissioned and equipped, their work was awaiting them : the harvest was ripe and ready for gathering in. The London churches were soon shut against Whitefield and Wesley, as they had been before against his brother Charles. Leaving the Wesleys at work among the societies, Whitefield, in February, went down to Bristol to preach in behalf of an Orphan House which he had opened in Georgia. In his absence, however, stories of his Methodist extravagance had reached the city ; and, though he had been immensely popular during his previous visit, the clergy, with a few honourable exceptions, excluded him from their pulpits. Fortunately, his journal of this period is preserved, and with this before us we can follow him day by day. On Thursday, February 15th, the Rev. Mr. Gibbs, the minister, refused him the use of Redcliff Church ; but " God having given him great favour in the jailer's eyes, he preached a sermon on the penitent thief in Newgate, and collected fifteen shillings for them."*

On Friday, February 16th, Whitefield commenced to read prayers to the Newgate prisoners, and this he did daily until

* Newgate, which Whitefield visited, and which was, subsequently, often the scene of his and Wesley's ministrations, was the old city gaol, built in 1691, and abandoned in 1820 for the new gaol near Bathurst Basin. Howard the philanthropist visited it in 1775, and describes it as standing in the midst of the city, white without, but foul within, and too small for the general number of prisoners.

persecution debarred him from even this poor privilege. On the evening of Friday he also "expounded from five till near nine to two thronged Societies." These were some of the Societies already alluded to as having originated in 1667, in the labours of two London clergymen.

The following day he went with two friends to Kingswood. "Kingswood," says Southey, "as its name implies, had been a royal chase, containing between three and four thousand acres, but it had been gradually appropriated by the several lords whose estates lay round about its borders; and their title, which for a long time was no better than what possession gave them, had been legalised. The deer had long since disappeared, and the greater part of the wood also; and coal mines having been discovered there, from which Bristol derives its chief supply of fuel, it was now inhabited by a race of people as lawless as the foresters their forefathers; but far more brutal, and differing as much from the people of the the surrounding country in dialect as in appearance. They had at that time no place of worship, for Kingswood then belonged to the out-parish of St. Philip and Jacob; and if the colliers had been disposed to come from a distance of three and four miles, they would have found no room in the parish church of a populous suburb. When upon his last visit to Bristol, before his embarkation, Whitefield spoke of converting the savages, many of his friends said to him 'What need of going abroad for this? Have we not Indians enough at home? If you have a mind to convert Indians, there are colliers enough in Kingswood.' Towards these colliers Whitefield, as he says, had long felt his bowels yearn, for they were very numerous, and as yet as sheep having no shepherd. In truth it was a matter of duty and of sound policy, (which is always duty) that these people should not be left in a state of bestial

ignorance ; heathens, or worse than heathens, in the midst of a christian country ; and brutal as savages, in the close vicinity of a city which was then in extent, wealth, population, and commercial importance, the second city in England. On the afternoon, therefore, of Saturday, February 17th, 1739, he stood upon a mount in a place called Rose Green, his ‘ first field pulpit,’ and preached to as many as came to hear, attracted by the novelty of such an address. ‘ I thought,’ says he, ‘ it might be doing the service of my Creator, who had a mountain for His pulpit, and the heavens for a sounding board ; and who, when His gospel was refused by the Jews, sent his servants into the highways and hedges,’ Not above two hundred persons gathered round him, for there had been no previous notice of his intention, and these, perhaps, being no way prepared for his exhortations, were more astonished than impressed by what they heard. But the first step was taken, and Whitefield was fully aware of its importance. ‘ Blessed be God,’ he says in his journal, ‘ that the ice is now broken, and I have now taken the field. Some may censure me ; but is there not a cause ? Pulpits are denied, and the poor colliers ready to perish for lack of knowledge.’ It was not, however, because pulpits were denied him that he had preached upon the mount at Rose Green ; but in the course wherein he was proceeding, that which at first was choice, soon became necessity.”*

Returning from Kingswood, Whitefield the same day wrote to the Bishop of Bristol as he had done before to the Bishop of Bath and Wells, for “ leave to preach in his lordship’s churches for the benefit of the Orphan House.” The following day, Sunday, February 18th, he preached in the morning at

* Southey’s Life of Wesley, I. 141.!

St. Werburgh's "with great freedom to a large audience;" in the afternoon, (the Rev. Mr. Gibbs having repented his first refusal) in St. Mary Redcliff "to such a congregation as his eyes had never before seen;" concluding the day with "expounding for near two hours" to a society in Baldwin Street, and the same length of time to another society in Nicholas Street, "equally thronged but with much greater power." The following day, in addition to services at Newgate and in Baldwin Street, he preached, in the afternoon, "to a great multitude at the parish church of St. Philip and Jacob, thousands going away because there was no room for them within."

The next entry in Whitefield's journal is very graphic and too important to be condensed. "Tuesday, Feb. 20th. This day my master honoured me more than ever he did yet. About ten in the morning, in compliance with a summons received from the apparator yesterday, I waited upon the Rev. M. R———l, the chancellor of Bristol, who now plainly told me he intended to stop my proceedings. 'I have sent for the Registrar here, Sir,' says he, 'to take down your answer,' upon which he asked me by what authority I preached in the diocese of Bristol, without a license. I answered, I thought the custom was grown obsolete; 'and why, pray, Sir, did you not ask the Irish clergyman this question who preached for you last Thursday?' He said that was nothing to me. He then read over part of the ordination-office, and those canons that forbid any minister preaching in a private house, &c.; and then he asked me what I said to them? I answered, that I apprehended those canons did not belong to professed ministers of the Church of England; but he said they did. 'There is also a canon,' said I, 'sir, forbidding all clergymen to frequent taverns and play at cards; why is not that put

into execution ?' 'Why does not somebody complain of them ?' says he, 'And then it would.' When I asked him why I was thus taken particular notice of, referring to my printed discourses for my principles, he said I preached false doctrine, upon which I answered him not a word, but told him, notwithstanding those canons, I could not but speak the things that I knew, and was resolved to proceed as usual. 'Observe his answer then,' said he, 'Mr. Registrar,' and turning to me added, 'I am resolved, Sir, if you preach or expound any where in this diocese, till you have a license, I will first suspend and then excommunicate you !' I then took my leave. He waited upon me very civilly to the door, and told me what he did was in the name of the clergy and laity of the city of Bristol ;—and so we parted.

"Being taken ill just before I went to the Chancellor, on my return home, I found I had not so much joy as peace. But, however, I did not perceive the least feeling of resentment to arise in my heart. And to show how little I regarded such threatenings, after I had joined in prayer for the Chancellor, I immediately went and expounded at Newgate as usual, where God gave me great joy, and wondrously pricked many to the heart, as though he would say,—'this is the way, walk ye in it.' After this we dined with several christian friends, with the kind keeper of the prison, and rejoiced exceedingly at the thought that we should some day or other sing together in such a place as Paul and Silas did. God prepare us for that hour, for I believe it will come. I shall be exalted, I must be humbled."

The interdict of the Chancellor was no idle threat. The following day thousands flocked to St. Nicholas Church to hear Whitefield preach ; but the preacher was shut out. Thus excluded from the Churches he went to Kingswood, and a

second time preached out of doors to near two thousand people. On the following Sunday the minister of Brislington offered him the use of his Church ; but so vast was the congregation that he preached in the churchyard, that none might be sent empty away. In the afternoon of the same day he preached again at Kingswood to above ten thousand people. He says, "The trees and hedges were full. All was hushed when I began ; the sun shone bright ; and God enabled me to preach for an hour with great power, and so loud that all, I was told, could hear me. Blessed be God, the fire is kindled in the country, and I know all the devils in hell shall not be able to quench it."* From this time his visits to Kingswood were frequent, and his open air endeavours extended to the city and other adjacent villages. In Bristol he preached in the Glass-house Yard, at Baptist Mills, and in the Bowling Green. The Bowling Green was crowded, and the windows and balconies of the surrounding houses filled with attentive hearers. Kingswood, however, was the scene of his most wonderful success. There his heart was most deeply moved, and the effects produced most marvellous. "To behold such crowds standing together in solemn silence, and to hear the echo of their singing resounding over the mighty mass, suggested to him the scene of the general assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect, when they shall join in singing the song of Moses and the Lamb in heaven ! The moral effect of these occasions still more deeply impressed him. Having no righteousness of their own to renounce, the poor colliers were glad to hear that Christ was a friend to publicans, and came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He could see the effect of his words by the white channels made by the

* Whitefield's Journal, p. 151.

tears which trickled down their blackened cheeks, for they came unwashed out of the coal pits to hear him. Hundreds after hundreds of them were brought under deep religious impressions, which, as the event proved, happily ended in sound and thorough conversions. The open firmament above him, the prospect of the adjacent fields, with the sight of thousands beyond thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback, and some in the trees, and at times 'all affected and drenched in tears together,' presented a scene which was sublime and overpowering to his vivid imagination, especially when the grand picture was impressed with the solemnity of the approaching night."*

During this time Whitefield had not forgotten his Orphan House in Georgia, and having collected a considerable sum he prepared for another Atlantic voyage.

On Monday, April 2nd, 1739, he took leave of the Bristol societies whose interests, amid all his unparalleled popularity, he had daily attended to. It was an affecting season. "Floods of tears flowed plentifully;" and when at last he forced himself away, about twenty friends on horseback escorted him through the city streets. Arrived at Kingswood, the grateful colliers surprised him with a hospitable entertainment. Religion had already quickened their thirst for knowledge. They had raised subscriptions for the erection of a school, and begged Whitefield, ere he left them, to lay the foundation stone. The request was somewhat premature, for as yet no site had been secured. Earnestness, however, gave promptness to their endeavours. A piece of land was at once providentially presented by a person standing by; the necessary materials were brought; and the same day Whitefield laid the foundation stone, accompanying the ceremony with solemn prayer and praise. This done, and farewells spoken, he proceeded on his way.

CHAPTER III.

SIGNS AND WONDERS.

Wesley in Bristol. — Commences Field Preaching. — Marvellous Manifestations.—Watson's Explanations.—Opposition.—Kingswood School opened.—Wesley's Philanthropy.—A riot averted.

BEFORE leaving Bristol, Whitefield wrote to Wesley to come and carry on the work so auspiciously commenced.

Hesitating at first, he was decided by casting lots, and arrived in Bristol on Saturday, March 31st, 1739, where he at once joined Whitefield at the house of Mr. Greville, an influential grocer in Wine Street, whose hospitable home was open to them often in after times. The following day Wesley heard Whitefield preach at the Bowling Green, Hanham, and Rose Green, and "could scarce reconcile himself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields." The following day Wesley was probably with the equestrians who accompanied Whitefield through the city and shared in the entertainment which the colliers had prepared, with its subsequent solemnities. The same evening, overcoming his scruples, he "proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence, in a ground adjoining the city, to about three thousand people." Thus

Wesley passed the Rubicon—thus he commenced his marvellous career as an open air evangelist from the appropriate text, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor ; He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted ; to preach deliverance to the captives ; the recovery of sight to the blind ; to set at liberty them that are bruised ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Having begun the work, Wesley spent a considerable part of 1739 and the following year in Bristol and the immediate neighbourhood. When duty called him to London or other parts, his place was usually supplied by his brother Charles.

His journals of this period are full of local interest. To the different “ Societies ” meeting in Nicholas Street, Baldwin Street, Castle Street, Gloucester Street, Back Lane, and Weaver’s Hall, he nightly “ expounded, in order, the word of life.” These several societies, under Wesley’s preaching, became the arenas of wonderful excitement—sinners often being stricken down as though in the throes of death. “While preaching on the Common from the words, ‘When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both,’ a young woman sank down in violent agony, as did five or six persons at another meeting in the evening. Many were greatly offended by their cries. The same offence was given during the day by one at ‘Theaner’s Hall,’ and by eight or nine others at ‘Gloucester Lane.’ One of these was a young lady, whose mother was irritated at the scandal, as she called it, of her daughter’s conduct : but ‘the mother was the next who dropped down and lost her senses in a moment, yet went home with her daughter full of joy, as did most of those who had been in pain.’ Such ‘phenomena’ increased continually. Bold blasphemers were instantly seized with agony, and cried aloud for the divine mercy ; and scores were

sometimes strewed on the ground at once, insensible as dead men. A traveller at one time was passing, but on pausing a moment to hear the preacher, was directly smitten to the earth, and lay there apparently without life. A quaker, who was admonishing the bystanders against these strange scenes as affectation and hypocrisy, was himself struck down as by an unseen hand, while the words of reproach were yet upon his lips. A weaver, a great disliker of dissenters, fearing that the new excitement would alienate his neighbours from the Church, went about zealously among them to prove that it was the work of Satan, and would endanger their souls. A new convert lent him one of Wesley's sermons: while reading it at home he suddenly turned pale, fell to the floor, and roared so mightily that the people ran into the house from the streets, and found him sweating, weeping, and screaming in anguish. He recovered his self-possession, and arose rejoicing in God. On one occasion great numbers fell around the preacher, while he was inviting them to 'enter into the holiest by a new and living way.' A woman opposed them as giving way to an agitation which they might control, and endeavoured to escape the assembly. Scarcely had she got three or four yards, when she fell down in as violent agony as the rest."*

Such were some of the scenes which attended Wesley's early Bristol ministry. It is remarkable that such manifestations were more prevalent in Bristol than in other parts, and were seldom seen in after years. Some, then as now, attributed them to "vehement eloquence acting upon weak minds, ardent feelings, and disordered fancies;" others, to demoniacal possession; and others, to the influence of the Holy Ghost.

Watson, in his "Life of Wesley," and more fully in his strictures on Southey's life of the great evangelist, places the

* Stevens's History of Methodism.

matter in its proper light:—"That cases of real enthusiasm occurred at this and subsequent periods, is indeed allowed. "There are always nervous, dreamy, and excitable people to be found; and the emotion which was produced among those who were really so 'pricked in the heart' as to cry with a sincerity equal to that which was felt by those of old, 'What shall we do to be saved!' would often be communicated to such persons by natural sympathy. No one could be blamed for this, unless he had encouraged the excitement for its own sake, or taught the people to regard it as a sign of grace, which most assuredly Mr. Wesley never did. Nor is it correct to represent these effects, genuine and fictitious together, as peculiar to Methodism. Yet the effects were not without precedent even in those circumstances in which they have been thought most singular and exceptionable. Great and rapid results of this kind were produced in the first ages of Christianity, but not without 'outcries,' and strong corporeal as well as mental emotions, nay, and extravagances too. But will any man from this argue against Christianity itself, or asperse the labours and characters of those holy men who planted its genuine root in Asia, Africa and Europe? Even in the decline of true piety in the Church of Christ there were not wanting holy and zealous ministers to carry out the tidings of salvation to the barbarous ancestors of European nations; and strong and effectual impressions were made by their faithful and powerful preaching upon the multitudes who surrounded them, accompanied with many effects. But all who went on these sacred missions were not enthusiasts; nor were all the conversions effected by them a mere exchange of superstitions. Like effects also often accompanied the preaching of eminent men at the reformation; and many of the

"Puritan and Nonconformist ministers had similar successes
 "in large districts in our own country. In Scotland, and also
 "among the grave Presbyterians of New England, previous to
 "the rise of Methodism, such impressions had not unfre-
 "quently been produced by the ministry of faithful men,
 "attended by very similar circumstances, and they might
 "have been informed that, though on a smaller scale, the
 "same results have followed the ministry of modern mission-
 "aries of different religious societies in various parts of the
 "world. It may be laid down as a principle established by fact,
 "that whenever a zealous and faithful ministry is raised up,
 "after a long spiritual dearth, the early effects of that ministry
 "are not only powerful, but often attended by extraordinary
 "circumstances; nor are such extraordinary circumstances
 "necessarily extravagances because they are not common * * *
 "It is neither irrational nor unscriptural to suppose that times
 "of great national darkness and depravity—the case certainly
 "of this country at the outset of Mr. Wesley and his
 "colleagues—in their glorious career—should require a strong
 "remedy, and that the attention of a sleeping people should
 "be roused by circumstances which could not fail to be
 "noticed by the most unthinking. We do not attach primary
 "importance to secondary circumstances; but they are not to
 "be wholly disregarded. The Lord was not in the wind, nor
 "in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the 'still small
 "voice;' yet that 'still small voice' might not have been
 "heard, except by minds roused from their inattention by the
 "shaking of the earth and the sounding of the storm."*

In addition to his continuous work among the societies,
 Wesley preached day after day to listening thousands in the

open air. The usual meeting places were Baptist Mills, Hanham Mount, Rose Green, Two-mile Hill, Fishponds, and the Bowling Green, "near the centre of the city." A graphic and impartial description of these great out-of-door gatherings is given in Hutton's Memoirs. "Their congregations," he says, "were composed of every description of persons, who, without the slightest attempts at order, assembled, crying 'Hurrah!' with one breath, and with the next bellowing and bursting into tears on account of their sins; some poking each other's ribs, and others shouting 'Hallelujah!' It was a jumble of extremes of good and evil; and so distracted alike were both preachers and hearers that it was enough to make one cry to God for His interference. Here thieves, prostitutes, fools, people of every class,—several men of distinction, a few of the learned, merchants, and numbers of poor people who had never entered a place of worship, assembled in crowds and became godly."*

The result to be expected from all this great excitement was open opposition, and this at once broke out. Newspapers, magazines, and countless pamphlets combined to heap upon the Wesleys and Whitefield the vilest vituperations. They were branded as "babblers," "insolent pretenders," "papists," "buffoons in religion," "mountebanks in theology," "visionary antics in gown and cassocks," and "quacks in divinity." Some of the more distinguished pamphleteers Wesley answered,—others he treated with the silent contempt they certainly deserved. The Archbishop of Canterbury threatened Charles Wesley with excommunication, and the Bishop of Bristol commanded John to leave his diocese; but, undeterred by threats they respectfully replied, and continued their usual

* Vide "Tyreman's Life of Wesley."

course. Wesley at first received permission to preach in Pensford Church, but this permission was afterwards withdrawn on the ground of his being mad. Charles Wesley attending a service in Temple Church, the officiating clergyman roughly repelled him from the sacrament. Visiting Bath, John was confronted by Beau Nash, who had sworn to resist his preaching; but before the eagle eye and earnest words of the great evangelist the decked-out dandy of the pump-room sneaked away, followed by the jeering of the crowd. The opposition soon broke into acts of open violence. At Hanham while one of Wesley's early helpers was preaching, a publican and his wife rode through the congregation, thrashing the people with their whips, and trampling them beneath their horse's hoofs. Little children, too, collected missiles, in the shape of stones and dead dogs, which their fathers flung at the hapless preacher's head. "Alderman Beecher" was so opposed to Wesley that when some poor wretches in the city prison, under sentence of death, earnestly desired to see him, he refused to hear their prayer: it is gratifying, however, to learn from Wesley's journal that the Mayor put to a nobler use his brief authority. Thus he writes: "Tuesday, April 1, 1740. While I was expounding the floods began to lift up their voice. Some or other of the children of Belial had laboured to disturb us several nights before; but now it seemed as if all the host of the aliens were come together with one consent. Not only the courts and the alleys, but all the street, upwards and downwards, were filled with people shouting, cursing and swearing, and ready to swallow the ground with fierceness and rage. The Mayor sent order that they should disperse. But they set him at nought. The chief Constable came next in person, who was, till then, sufficiently prejudiced against us. But they insulted him also in so gross a manner as I

believe fully opened his eyes. At length the Mayor sent his officers, who took the ringleaders into custody and dispersed the rest. Surely he hath been to us 'the minister of God for good.'" On Wednesday, the 2nd: "The rioters were brought up to the court, the Quarter Sessions being held that day. They began to excuse themselves by saying many things of me, but the Mayor cut them all short by saying, 'What Mr. Wesley is is nothing to you. I will keep the peace: I will have no rioting in this city.'"

A few days after this occurrence one of the leaders of the disturbance hanged himself; another was stricken down with severe sickness, and solicited an interest in Wesley's prayers; and a third came to him and, confessing that he had been hired and made drunk for the purpose, besought his pardon for the wrong.

Wesley's association with Bristol during this early period reveals the breadth and grandeur of his character. He was a man eminently in advance of his times, and so far from being "cabined, cribbed, confined" by sectarian selfishness, his sympathies embraced the lower as well as the highest interests of all. At this time no national system of education existed; Bell and Lancaster were as yet unknown; and though by the munificence of Carr, Colston, and others, "hospitals" and "schools" had been endowed for the education of the poor, the provision was utterly inadequate to meet the growing demand. In 1739, the same year in which Redcliff Charity School was opened in Pile Street, Wesley commenced a school in the city for the education and partial maintenance of the children of the poor. About the same time he also collected contributions for the School at Kingswood the foundation stone of which had been laid by Whitefield; and, the building finished, he opened it early in the following year. A tragic

interest is attached to his early educational efforts. The first master of the Bristol School was a man named Ramsay, who being in a state of destitution had applied to Wesley for relief. Ramsay soon after, in concert with a man named Snoude, robbed the too-confiding Wesley of £30 collected for Kingswood School, and decamped to London. Devoting themselves to highway robbery both were soon after arrested, when Snoude was transported, and Ramsay executed at Tyburn.

Wesley was eminently a philanthropist. Spotted fever, a malignant disease which seldom spared its victims, was prevalent in Bristol; and, reckless of himself, he went from house to house ministering to body and to soul. A protracted frost in the beginning of 1740 threw hundreds out of work, thus creating great distress; and while it lasted he fed from a hundred to a hundred and fifty every day. Later in the year, provisions being very dear and employment scarce, he took into his meeting house twelve of the poorest people he could find, and to save them at once from want and idleness, employed them for four months in carding and spinning wool.

During the same summer the influence of the Wesleys averted from Bristol what would probably have proved a destructive and murderous riot. Maddened by the dearness of corn the Kingswood colliers rose, and arming as best they could, marched towards the city. Charles Wesley, riding over Lawrence Hill, met about a thousand face to face. Among them were some Methodists who had been forced, by ill usage and threats of murder, to accompany their riotous fellow pitmen. These, seeing their minister, saluted him affectionately, and resolved to return with him to the Kingswood School. This they did with great difficulty, the violent ones opposing them with blows. Charles Wesley's account of it is

very graphic. "Many seemed inclined to go back with me, but the devil stirred up his oldest servants, who rushed upon the others beating and tearing and driving them away from me. I rode up to a ruffian who was striking one of our colliers and prayed him rather to strike me. 'He would not,' he said, for 'all the world,' and was quite overcome. I turned upon one who struck my horse, and he also sank into a lamb. I seized on one of the tallest and earnestly besought him to follow me: 'that he would,' he said, 'all the world over.' About six more I pressed into Christ's service. We met several parties, stopped, and exhorted them to join us. We gleaned a few from every company, and grew as we marched along, singing to the school. From one till three we spent in prayer that evil might be prevented, and the lion chained. Then news was brought us that the colliers were returned in peace. They had quietly walked into the city without sticks or the least violence. A few of the better sort went to the Mayor and told their grievance. Then all returned as they came, without noise or disturbance. All who saw were amazed, for the leopards were laid down."*

* Jackson's "Life of Charles Wesley."

CHAPTER IV.

DEVELOPMENT AND DIVISIONS.

The first Methodist Chapel—Separation from Moravians—Secession of Calvinists—Origin of Class-meetings—Persecution—Scene at Pensford.

ALMOST coincidently with its earliest evangelical successes, Methodism began to crystallize into its distinctive institutions, doctrines and discipline.

Six weeks only after the commencement of Wesley's efforts in Bristol, on Saturday, May 12th, 1739, the foundation stone of the first Methodist Chapel in the world was laid on a piece of ground in the Horse-fair, near St. James's Church. This Chapel was duly opened a few months later. It appears to have been simply a commodious preaching room with two small contiguous apartments, in which sometimes Wesley and the early preachers lodged. Two years later, Whitefield having complained of unnecessary expenditure incurred, Wesley sent him this reply: "The Society-room at Bristol you say is adorned. How? Why, with a piece of green cloth nailed to the desk, and two scones for eight candles each in the middle. I know no more. Now, which of these can be spared? I know not; nor would I desire more adorning, or less. But

‘lodgings are made for me and my brother.’ That is in plain English. There is a little room by the School where I speak to the persons who come to me, and a garret in which a bed is placed for me. And do you grudge me this? Is this the voice of my brother,—my son Whitefield?”

At first the preaching room was vested in trustees, but soon after Wesley cancelled the deed and vested the property in himself. Six years subsequently, he again settled it on trustees, reserving only for himself and brother the liberty of preaching and lodging therein. In March 1747, he wrote, “I considered what would I do now if I was sure I had but two days to live? All outward things are settled to my wish: the houses at Bristol, Kingswood and Newcastle are safe; the deeds whereby they are conveyed to the trustees took place on the 5th instant; my will is made; what have I more to do but to commend my soul to my merciful and faithful Creator?”

The year 1740 was one of great Methodistic development. Deserted by the clergy, Wesley began to employ lay preachers. His earliest preachers were John Cennick, who was appointed to labour among the Kingswood colliers, and Thomas Maxfield, a Bristolian, converted in the St. Nicholas Street society-room, who was sent to the “Foundry”—the name of the first London preaching room. The employment of laymen as preachers was a startling innovation; and while it alienated from Wesley some who had hitherto been his friends, it intensified the hate of his enemies. An amusing conversation on this subject took place some years after at the Hotwells between Charles Wesley, and Robinson, the Archbishop of Armagh: “I knew your brother well,” said the Archbishop, “I could never credit all I heard respecting him and you; but one thing in your conduct I could never account for—your

employing laymen." "My lord," said Charles, "the fault is yours and your brethren's." "How so," asked the Primate. "Because you hold your peace and the stones cry out." "But I am told," his Grace continued, "they are unlearned men." "Some are," replied the poet, "and so the dumb ass rebukes the prophet."

Wesley's lay helpers increased rapidly from year to year, and numbered not less than fifty at the time of the first Bristol Conference.

On July 22, 1740, Wesley formally and finally, on doctrinal grounds, separated from the Moravians at Fetter Lane; and of the members who seceded with him, formed at the Foundry the first, strictly speaking, Methodist Society. The Bristol Methodists soon followed suit, and constituted themselves a distinct Society, their head-quarters being the Horse-fair preaching room.

Calvinistic views were at this time increasingly prevalent, and to arrest the growing evil, Wesley preached in Bristol a sermon from Romans viii. 32, on the doctrine of "Free grace," and promptly published it. But seldom, if ever, certainly, has a sermon been productive of greater results. The Arminian tenets boldly expressed therein, led to the severance of Whitefield—who had strongly espoused Calvinistic opinions—from his old friend and fellow labourer; the establishment of "Lady Huntingdon's Connexion," the rise of the "Welsh Calvinistic Methodists," and a protracted controversy which culminated thirty years after in the publication of Fletcher's unequalled "Checks."

The doctrinal disputes between Wesley and Whitefield caused great glee among their common enemies, and created divisions in the Bristol and Kingswood Societies. Cennick, the Kingswood preacher, embraced the Calvinistic creed, and in recklessness

of zeal, publicly animadverted on Wesley's character and public teaching. At a love feast, held in Bristol, Wesley challenged him with it, and the proofs being conclusive, in the presence and with the concurrence of the majority of the Kingswood Society, he expelled him for slander, about fifty of his Calvinistic sympathisers withdrawing with him. The Bristol and Kingswood Societies thus divided by doctrinal differences, Wesley closely scrutinized them, and for the first time in Methodist history, gave Society tickets to those in whom he had confidence—a custom which continues to this day. Those early Society tickets were mostly quaint pictorial productions, printed on cardboard, and containing no inscription save Wesley's signature.

Two years later, Bristol Methodism originated the class meeting with its weekly contributions.* Under the date of Feb. 15th, 1742, Wesley records the rise of this institution, so closely interwoven with Methodist life and enterprise, "I was talking with several of the Society in Bristol concerning the means of paying the debts there, when one stood up and said, 'Let every member of the Society pay a penny a week till all are paid.' Another answered, 'But many of them are poor and cannot afford to do it.' 'Then,' said he, 'put eleven of the poorest with me, and if they can give nothing, I will give for them as well as myself; and each of you call on eleven of your neighbours weekly, receive what they give, and make up what is wanting.' It was done. In a while some of these informed me they found such and such an one did not live as he ought. It struck me immediately, 'This is the thing, the very thing we have wanted so long.' I called together all the leaders of the classes, (so we used to term them and their companies) and desired that each would make a particular inquiry into the behaviour of those whom

* See Appendix A.

he saw weekly. They did so. Many disorderly walkers were detected. Some turned from the evil of their ways; some were put away from us.'

At first the leaders visited the members of their respective homes, but this mode, making too great a demand upon their time, was soon abandoned for the still prevailing plan of meeting together at a given hour in some appointed place. The Bristol Society being thus organized, returned about seven hundred members.

During the years now being reviewed, the Wesleys engaged in the most extensive travels, often, however, returning to their Bristol work. Once, seized in Wales with sickness, John hastened to Bristol, and in fever, for eight days, hung between life and death. Charles, crossing the New Passage with "faithful Felix Farley" and another friend narrowly escaped, "in answer to prayer," a watery grave,—the lighter in which they sailed being nearly driven on the Black-rock, on which a ship had dashed, and thirty-two persons lost, but a few weeks before.

In their Bristol ministry the brothers sometimes met with amusing incidents. While Charles was conducting a Kingswood meeting a wild collier brought four of his black faced little ones, and threw the youngest on the table saying, "You have got the mother take the bairns as well." But these pleasantries were but the occasional relief of protracted persecution. A pamphlet entitled "The progress of Methodism in Bristol, or the Methodist unmasked," disseminated in Hudibrastic verse the vilest slanders. The Clergy warned their flocks against them, and it is noted as remarkable that the bitterest of them all whilst so engaged was seized with mortal sickness in the pulpit of St. Nicholas Church and shortly after died. This opposition

was intensified towards the close of this period by the prevalent expectation of an invasion by the French in favour of the royal House of Stuart. Their enemies branded them as Papists, Jacobins, and traitors against the King and constitution. A Bristol backslider declared he would "make affidavit that he had seen Wesley administer extreme unction to a woman, and give her a wafer and say that that was her passport to heaven." While following Hannah Richardson, a deceased member of the Society, to her grave, the procession was pelted through the streets with dirt and stones. Charles Wesley preaching in the neighbourhood of Bristol, a justice of peace threatened him with terrible things and urged the mob to pull him down. Pensford, now so peaceful, among the persecuting places stood pre-eminently out. We have already seen that on a former occasion the vicar withdrew his permission to Wesley to preach in Pensford church, on the ground of his being mad; somewhat later his journal contains the following entry:—Friday, March 19, 1742, "I rode once more to Pensford at the earnest request of several serious people. The place where they desired me to preach was a little green spot, near the town. But I had no sooner begun than a great company of rabble, hired (as I afterwards found) for that purpose, came furiously upon us, bringing a bull which they had been baiting, and now strove to drive in among the people. But the beast was wiser than his drivers, and continually ran either on one side of us or the other, while we quietly sang praise to God and prayed for about an hour. The poor wretches finding themselves disappointed, at length seized upon the bull, now weak and tired, after being so long torn and beaten both by dogs and men, and by main strength partly dragged and partly thrust him in among the people. When they had forced their way to the little table on which

I stood, they strove several times to throw it down by thrusting the helpless beast against it, who, of himself, stirred no more than a log of wood. I once or twice put his head aside with my hand that the blood might not drop upon my clothes, intending to go on as soon as the hurry should be a little over. But the table falling down some of the friends caught me in their arms and carried me right away on their shoulders, while the rabble wreaked their vengeance on the table, which they tore bit by bit. We went a little way off, where I finished my discourse without any noise or interruption."

CHAPTER V.

CONFERENCES AND CONFLICTS.

Conference of 1745—The “Young Pretender”—Conference of 1746—
Narrow Escape—Disturbance at Devizes.

THE first Wesleyan Conference was held in London in 1744, and the second, in Bristol in the succeeding year. It was held in the Horsefair preaching room, commencing its sitting on Thursday, August 1st, 1745, and concluding on the following Tuesday. In prospect of the pending enlargement of the Conference basis, it is gratifying to find that it consisted of clergymen, lay preachers, and a layman,—numbering ten in all. In addition to the Wesleys, the clergy were represented by the Rev. John Hodges, Rector of Wenvo, a friend and co-labourer of the Wesleys in the principality; the lay preachers by Thomas Richards, Samuel Larwood, Thomas Meyrick, James Wheatley, Richard Moss, John Slocombe, and Herbert Jenkins. The solitary layman was Marmaduke Gwynne, a magistrate of Garth, a Methodist whose princely mansion was always open to the early itinerants.

At the commencement of the Conference, Wesley laid down rules for the guidance of their deliberations. It was decided that “care should be taken to check no one, either by word or look, even though he should say that which was quite

wrong." That every point might be rightly settled, it was resolved "to beware of making haste, or of showing or indulging any impatience, whether of delay or contradiction." Its method settled, the conference next devoted its attention to doctrinal matters, defining its views on Justification, Sanctification, and the Witness of the Spirit, as they are now methodistically received. To the "Rules of a Helper," formulated at the first Conference, the reminder was added that they had "nothing to do but to save souls." In order to this it was resolved to spend in addition to daily preaching services from six o'clock till twelve every day in reading, writing, and prayer; from twelve to five in visiting; and from five to six in private communion with God." In their preaching they were to dwell less on the wrath and more on the love of God. Then followed a discussion on church government, wherein Wesley clearly indicated a growing liberality of view, and a departure from that obedience to episcopal government which in earlier days he was prepared to yield. He still, however, believed in Apostolic succession, in the priestly character of the Christian ministry, and in the essential distinction of its Orders. These notions he abandoned in after years.

The very day on which the first Bristol Conference opened, the Government offered a reward of £30,000 for the apprehension of Prince Charles Stuart, the "Young Pretender." The battle of Preston Pans was soon after lost; and Charles, already proclaimed at Edinboro', King of England, was rapidly leading his army south. The Bristol merchants at once raised £36,450 to resist the Pretender, and sent sixty men as a reinforcement to the King's guard in London. Charles Wesley continued in Bristol and the neighbourhood, calling on the public to turn to God, in order that His

judgments might be turned away; and John hastened to Newcastle to be with his people in their alarm and peril. There, while the danger lasted, he remained preaching day and night in the town and adjacent villages, encouraging the loyalty of the populace, and urging them to repent and put their trust in God.

During the next few months Wesley's visits to Bristol were but occasional. In January he presided at a Conference of the Calvinistic Methodists, in which something like harmony of action if not of opinion was arrived at between him and the Whitefieldites. On Monday, April 7th, he laid the foundation stone of a new preaching house at Kingswood, discoursing, on the occasion, from Isaiah lx. 17-22. Charles, meanwhile, spent the most of the time in this neighbourhood, meeting with a considerable measure of success. At Road he dined at the "Squire's," who seemed amazed and half converted at the change wrought by the Methodists in the conduct of the drunkards and profligate of the place. At Shepton Mallet he severely sprained his leg, and for some weeks was carried from place to place, preaching daily on his knees.

The third Wesleyan Conference was held in Bristol only nine months after the second. It commenced on Tuesday, May 12th, 1746, and appears to have finished the following Friday. Four clergymen were present, viz., the two Wesleys, John Hodges, the Rector of Wenvo, and Samuel Taylor, the Vicar of Quinton; also five lay preachers. As at former Conferences, doctrines were first reviewed and carefully guarded against error and abuse, and afterwards points of discipline were discussed and settled. To the present opponents of lay representation in the Conference the fact is commended, that it was decided that the "properest persons to be present at *any* Conference" were "the preachers, the

most earnest and sensible of the band leaders of the Conference town, and any pious and judicious stranger that might be visiting the place." In reference to candidates [for the itinerancy, it was resolved that all who believed themselves called by the Holy Ghost to preach should be tested by the question, "Have they grace, gifts, and fruits?"—a question of which the present protracted mode of admittance into the Wesleyan ministry is but the natural elaboration, During the preceding year, Wesley's views on episcopacy had been considerably modified by reading "Lord King on the Primitive Church;" and already the ordination of his fellow labourers occurred to him as a future contingency. To the question why they did not use more solemnity in receiving a lay preacher, it was replied:—"The Conference declines it: first—because there is something of stateliness in it; second—because it is not expedient to *make haste*; we desire barely to follow providence as it gradually opens." Meanwhile efforts were to be employed to induce the people to attend the Church, and, as an example to the Bristol Methodists, it was agreed that the stationed preachers should attend the services of the contiguous church of St. James, on the Wednesday and Friday of every week. For the first time this year the several circuits were enumerated in the "Disciplinary Minutes." They numbered only seven, and the vast extent of ground they covered will afford the reader an idea of the work which the early "Rounders" had to do. Thus runs the list: 1, *London*—which includes Surrey, Kent, Essex, Brentford, Egham, Windsor, and Wycombe. 2, *Bristol*, which includes Somersetshire, Portland, Wilts, Oxfordshire, and Gloucestershire. 3, *Cornwall*. 4, *Evesham*—which includes Shrewsbury, Leominster, Hereford, and from Stroud to Wednesbury. 5, *Yorkshire*—which

includes Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutlandshire, and Lincolnshire. 6, *Newcastle*. 7, *Wales*.

Four years elapsed ere the conference was held in Bristol again. Meanwhile, left principally to lay preachers the "cause" continued to flourish, the Wesleys visiting it as often as their now extensive itinerary allowed. On these occasions they preached usually in the Horsefair Preaching Room, at Baptist Mills, at Bedminster, at Weaver's Hall,* at Kingswood, and in the "Old Orchard." Early in 1747 an accident occurred to John which might have cut short his useful life. Riding through narrow St. Nicholas Street the shaft of a runaway horse and cart knocked down his hack and the wheel narrowly escaped the prostrate rider's head. Sorely bruised but unperturbed he forthwith reached from "Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast," and afterwards "some warm treacle took away all pain in an hour or two."

About this time, taking Bristol as his centre, Wesley carried the gospel into several adjacent towns. In Devizes he was much opposed; "the town was in an uproar from end to end as if the French were just entering, and abundance of swelling words were spoken, oaths, curses, and threatenings." Soon after Charles visited Devizes, and a riot occurred, from which he and Mr. Meriton narrowly escaped with life. As soon as they arrived the mob mustered their forces for the battle. "They began with ringing the bells backward and running to and fro in the streets as lions roaring for their prey. The chief gentleman of the town headed the mob, and the "zealous curate, Mr. Innys, stood with them in the street the whole time, dancing for joy." Assaulting the house in which the little society were met for worship, the rabble blocked up the door with a waggon and set up lights lest he should escape." Finding refuge in the house of a friendly

* See Appendix B.

Baptist, Charles and his friend spent the night in peace, but the next morning the riot recommenced. "While preaching to a few listening sinners" in the house of Mrs. Phillips, the mob brought the fire-engine and soon broke the windows, flooded the room, and spoiled the goods. Then seizing on one of the Society they dragged him away and threw him into the horse-pond. Charles Wesley's life was now in imminent danger, and the mayor's wife—the mayor himself being absent from the town—sent her maid to beg him to disguise himself in woman's clothes and try to make his escape. This he declined to do, and with his companions continued to pray and converse, calmly confident "that the Lord would deliver them." The mob now began to untile the roof, but just at this juncture a constable and some gentlemen arrived and succeeded in restraining their violence. Escorted by the constable and his feeble *posse*, Charles and Mr. Meriton came boldly forth and took horse in the face of their enemies. "We rode," so says he in his record, "a slow pace up the street, the whole multitude pouring along on both sides, and attending us with loud acclamations. Such fierceness and diabolical malice I have not seen on human faces. They ran up to our horses as if they would swallow us, but did not know which was Wesley. We felt great peace and acquiescence in the honour done us, while the whole town were spectators of our march."* After riding some little way the mob set on them two bulldogs which attacked Mr. Meriton's horse and tore its flesh. Getting at length beyond their persecutors' reach they rode on to Wrexall, where they united in hearty praise to their Divine deliverer in Charles Wesley's own hymn, now so well and widely known:—

* Jackson's "Life of C. Wesley."

Worship, and thanks, and blessing,
And strength ascribe to Jesus !
Jesus alone defends his own,
When earth and hell oppress us.
Jesus with joy we witness
Almighty to deliver ;
Our seals set to, that God is true,
And reigns a King for ever.

Omnipotent Redeemer,
Our ransom'd souls adore thee :
Our Saviour thou, we find it now,
And give thee all the glory.
We sing thine arm unshorten'd,
Brought through our sore temptation ;
With heart and voice In thee rejoice,
The God of our salvation.

Thine arm hath safely brought us
A way no more expected,
Than when thy sheep pass'd through the deep,
By crystal walls protected.
Thy glory was our rear-ward,
Thine hand our lives did cover,
And we, even we, have pass'd the sea,
And march'd triumphant over.

The world's and Satan's malice
Thou, Jesus, hast confounded ;
And, by thy grace, with songs of praise
Our happy souls resounded.
Accepting our deliv'rance,
We triumph in thy favour,
And for the love which now we prove,
Shall praise thy name for ever.

CHAPTER VI.

KINGSWOOD SCHOOL — CONNUBIAL
EXPERIENCES.

Opening of Kingswood School—Enlargement of the Broadmead Chapel
—Marriage of Charles Wesley—Earthquake in London—Con-
ference of 1750—Marriage of John Wesley, and marital misery—
Poverty and penuriousness.

ON Friday, June 24th, 1748, Wesley, assisted by his brother, opened the Kingswood School. Seven years earlier a School—the foundation stone of which was laid by Whitefield—had been commenced for the use of the colliers, but the new School was a distinct boarding establishment intended to convey on Christian principles a superior education to the children of the wealthier class. After several ineffectual attempts to make it a general School for the Methodist Connexion it became step by step exclusively an institution for the education of Methodist Preachers' sons. Wesley preached on the occasion of the opening from "Train up a child, &c." and then drew up the scholastic rules. Examining them, the secret of its failure as a public school is obvious. The poor itinerants were glad to get a superior education for their sons at any cost of parental feeling, but no parent whose means would admit of sending his sons to

other institutions would be likely to subject them to the hardships to which the first scholars were exposed. The children were admitted at six years of age, and, from the day of their admission, were required to rise the year round at *four*; to fast, if in good health, every Friday till three o'clock in the afternoon, and *never to play*, for the reason asserted in a mistaken German proverb "he who plays when he is a child will play when he becomes a man." Had Wesley been the favoured father of half-a-dozen boisterous boys and girls, instead of an inexperienced bachelor in middle life he would probably have drawn up rules more consistent with common experience—more compatible with healthful childhood's imperative demands.

Established on such a stringent unnatural basis one wonders not that it proved to Wesley a source of ceaseless trouble. Masters and scholars alike rebelled against a yoke intolerable to be borne. Wesley, however, continued inexorable. Such restrictions could never last. After its founder's decease there dawned a sunnier day for Kingswood School. Many a noble man, both ministerial and lay, now looks back with unfeigned pleasure to his old Kingswood days, the memories of football and cricket being far more odorous than those of Euclid, Virgil, and Cicero. The school at Kingswood continued until 1851, when it was superseded by the spacious "New Kingswood School," on Lansdown Hill, near Bath.

The Horsefair preaching-house shewing signs of insecurity, and, moreover, proving too small for the worshippers, it was enlarged in 1748, at a considerable expense. For the proper carrying out of the builder's contract, Wesley appointed five supervising Stewards or honorary clerks of the works. It was re-opened by Wesley for public worship on Thursday, September 15th. Probably an entrance at that time was made to

the chapel from Broadmead ; hence, afterwards it was known as the Broadmead preaching-house. The chapel, as it was then made, stands to-day, though for many years it has passed into the hands of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists. A few days after the re-opening of the chapel, Wesley carefully scrutinized the Bristol Society, leaving out every careless person, and every one who wilfully refused to meet his brethren weekly. By this weeding process the membership was reduced from nine hundred to about seven hundred and fifty.

On Tuesday, April 8th, 1749, Charles Wesley was married to Sarah, daughter of Marmaduke Gywnlle, of Garth. A fortnight after, leaving his bride behind him, he set out for Bristol. Feeling feverish on his arrival, Dr. Middleton so "sweated, blooded, and vomited" him that for some days he could not preach. Recovering, he set forth on his circuit rounds, his wife re-joining him at Hereford. For some time she accompanied him from town to town, everywhere receiving the respect and admiration of the "Societies," a homage particularly acceptable to Charles, who wrote, "All look upon my Sally with my eyes." Their usual mode of travelling was on horseback,—Mrs. Charles seated on a pillion behind her husband. This was a dangerous mode of travelling, for Charles was a most unfortunate horseman. He often composed on horseback, and poetic reverie and riding over rugged roads were evidently most incompatible. To be thrown was to him a very common occurrence. Only a few weeks before his marriage he was un-horsed, and led bruised and bleeding into Bristol ; a few weeks after, for once driving instead of as usual riding with his wife, he "very gently overturned, without hurting her in the least." After some months the state of Mrs. Wesley's health called for a less locomotive style of life, and the worthy pair fixed

on Bristol as their home. A small house in Stokes Croft was secured, at an annual rental of £11, and house-keeping forthwith commenced. There they lived—though Charles Wesley was necessarily much from home—their hospitable abode always open to the itinerants, until 1771, when they finally removed to London. The marriage was in every way a very happy one. Seventeen years his junior, Mrs. Wesley survived her husband just twice that length of time, and died in 1822, at the patriarchal age of ninety-six.

By the Conference of 1749, held in London, John Jones was appointed to labour in the Bristol circuit. This was the first official appointment to the circuit of which any record now remains. Jones was a man of considerable learning, of good abilities, and genuine piety. Almost immediately after his appointment he was favoured with the company of his chief—Wesley having spent some little time toward the close of the year at Kingswood, preparing his sermons for the press.

On March 8th, 1750, London was thrown into consternation by the violent shock of an earthquake. While Charles Wesley was preaching in the Foundry the building perceptibly rocked. The congregation was alarmed, but the preacher with almost supernatural calmness lifted up his voice, and cried, "God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." On that very eventful day, John Wesley commenced another Bristol Conference. Of the meeting only the briefest memorandum now remains. Wesley says, "I desired all the preachers that were in Bristol to meet me at four in the afternoon; and so every day while I was in town. In the evening God rent the rocks again. I wondered

at the words He gave me to speak. But He doeth whatsoever pleaseth Him."

Four months later, after some time spent in Ireland, and a stormy passage in the Channel, Wesley was there again. Christopher Hopper, one of the early preachers, was his companion, and the following extract is from his diary. "July 22nd. I embarked with Mr. Wesley for England. 23rd—We had a violent squall of wind, thunder, and lightning, between the Welsh lands and the rocky shore of Lundy. We cried to the Lord in our trouble, and he delivered us out of our distress. 24th. The wind was contrary. It blew a storm. The seas ran mountains high. We were tossed in a narrow channel, full of rocks, shoals, and sands. We prayed for help: our God heard, and brought us safe to Pill."

On arriving at Bristol, Wesley found that the *Bristol Weekly Intelligencer* had just published three folio columns of scurrilous abuse against him and the Methodists in general; but not deigning to reply, he devoted himself to his accustomed work, preaching among other places at "Points' Pool, a little without Lawford's Gate,* just in the midst of the butchers and all the rebel rout that neither fear God nor reverence man."

In February, 1751, Wesley was married to Mrs. Vazielle—a widow lady of independent means. Charles was strongly opposed to the union from the first, but so far reconciled himself to

* Lawford's Gate—in Saxon times known as Hlaford's Gate—stood at the top of Old Market Street. It was rebuilt in 1395 by John Walter Barstable—three times mayor of Bristol. Forming one of the principal entrances to the city, it was the place usually chosen for the public reception of distinguished visitors. The Sovereigns Elizabeth and Ann, Charles II. and James II. were received at Lawford's Gate by the Mayor and Corporation, arrayed in all the gorgeous finery of ancient civic state. Lawford's Gate was finally demolished in 1768.

what could not be undone, that when a few days after the marriage, the bride and bridegroom appeared in the Broadmead Chapel, he saluted his sister-in-law and gave her the kiss of peace. Wesley, during his honeymoon, conducted another Bristol Conference. It began on Monday, March 11th, and continued until the close of the week. Before it opened he had been greatly depressed, fearing that some of his preachers had departed from the simplicity of the faith. Investigation however, proved that his fears were groundless, and he briefly records of it, "the more we conversed the more brotherly love increased." This could not be said of the conjugal relations of himself and wife. Mrs. Wesley had already commenced her unwifely conduct. John Wesley's itinerating life was certainly not conducive to domestic happiness even though he had secured one of Mahomets four perfect women; and so far from possessing impeccability, Mrs. Wesley was "peevish, sullen, sour—a foul contending rebel and graceless traitor to her loving lord." Southey says that by her outrageous jealousies and terrible temper she deserved to be classed in a triad with "Socrates' Xantippe and the wife of Job." Words with her led on to blows, borne by her victim with Christian fortitude. All of Wesley's lay preachers were evidently not of kindred meekness with their chief. "Jack" said gigantic John Hampson, Senior, to his son. "I was once on the point of committing murder. In the north of Ireland I went into a room and found Mrs. Wesley foaming with fury. Her husband was on the floor, where she had been trailing him by the hair of his head; and she herself was still holding in her hand venerable locks which she had plucked up by the roots. I felt as though I could have knocked the soul out of her." For twenty years she tormented him, then mercifully left the home so long

bereft by her of homeliness. In his journal Wesley simply chronicles the past and adds, "*Non eam reliqui, non dimisi, non revocabo* :—I did not forsake her, I did not dismiss her, I will not recall her."

The next Conference was held in Bristol, Oct. 16, 1752. Up to that time no settled arrangement for the support of the lay preachers had existed. In the original "Rules of a Helper" drawn up 1744, it was enjoined: "Take no money of any one. If they give you food when you are hungry, or clothes when you need them, it is good. But not silver or gold. Let there be no pretence to say, we grow rich by the Gospel." This precarious mode of life was found to entail many inconveniences, especially upon the least popular of the itinerants; therefore, at this Conference it was resolved "That each preacher should receive £12 per annum to provide himself with clothing and with books." Money it must be remembered was of more value then than now; but the first Methodist Stewards must have been somewhat penurious as well as poor. Soon after this arrangement Alexander Mather being requested to accompany Wesley into Ireland, requested his circuit stewards to allow his wife during his absence four shillings a week for her support. The stewards thought that this was a larger sum than they could afford, and Mather therefore wisely refused to undertake the journey. York is now honourably spoken of for its generous treatment of its ministers; in 1765 a deputation was sent from that city to the Conference at Manchester, to plead against the hardship of being obliged to give the extravagant sum of £12 per year stipend to their appointed preachers.

Four years elapsed before the Conference was again held in Bristol; meanwhile the good work went on. In 1753

Wesley visited Felix Farley on his death bed. By the Conference of that year William Hitchins, John Haime, and Paul Greenwood were the appointed itinerants. Greenwood, several years later became somewhat conspicuous by persisting in his ecclesiastical right to administer the Sacrament in opposition to Charles Wesley's wish ; and John Haime is immortalised as one of the Methodist soldiers, who alike for Christ and for their country won high honours on the fatal fields of Flanders.

CHAPTER VII.

PATRIOTISM AND PHILANTHROPY.

A Bristol Riot—Wesley ill—Death of C. Wesley's child—Patriotism
—Conferences of 1756 and 1758—French Captives at Knowle—
Conferences of 1760—Condemned Prisoners.

EARLY in 1753 a riot occurred in Bristol of a very alarming kind. Provoked by the dearness of bread, the colliers arose, smashed the windows of the Council-house, sacked a grain vessel on the quay, pelted the constables and city guards with stones, and were proceeding to greater outrage when the Scotch Greys arrived, killed four of them, took thirty prisoners, and dispersed the rest. While lying in the Bridewell, repenting at leisure their reckless lawlessness, the poor colliers sent for Wesley, who, prompt to every call, went and preached to them.

Soon after this Wesley was seized with a dangerous sickness. Believing that his end was nigh, "to prevent vile panegyric," he penned his epitaph :—"Here lieth the body of John Wesley—a brand plucked out of the burning—who died of a consumption in the fifty-first year of his age, not leaving, after his debts are paid, ten pounds behind him ; praying—God

be merciful to me an unprofitable servant." Charles Wesley hurried from Bristol to see his brother die, and Whitefield, who, with all their doctrinal differences, still held Wesley in high esteem, sent him a letter of loving, lingering F-a-r-e-w-e-l-l. But Wesley's work was not yet done. Much prayer was presented for him; and, to the surprise of the physicians, who had pronounced the disease "galloping consumption," he slowly recovered. As soon as he could safely travel he removed from London to the Hotwells, where he spent several months in comparative quietude, during which he wrote his invaluable "Notes on the New Testament."

During Charles Wesley's absence from Bristol, attending his sick brother, his wife, who remained at home, was taken with small pox, and brought very near to death. Scarcely was she out of danger when their first-born and only child was seized, and, ere his father could reach him, died. Thomas Jackson, in his "Life of Charles Wesley," tells of "some light and delicate hair" on the study table before him as he wrote, on the folded wrapper of which, ninety years before, the sorrowing mother had inscribed, "My dear Jacky Wesley's hair, who died of small pox, on Monday, Jan. 7th, 1753-4, aged a year, four months and seventeen days. I shall go to him, but he never shall return to me." This was the first shadow which fell on the Stokes Croft home; but soon was it gladdened again by childhood's prattlings, and years after once more the darkness lowered in the death of James, their third-born son.

In 1756 the "Seven years' War" commenced. France, Russia, Sweden, and Saxony allied against England and Prussia, and great alarm prevailed. Friday, February 6th, was set apart for national humiliation and prayer. In this

Wesley and his Societies of course concurred, but, like Cromwell, he believed in fighting as well as devotional exercise. On the 1st day of March he wrote to the Hon. James West, offering to raise for his Majesty's service two hundred volunteers, to be supported by Connexional contributions. Having made this loyal offer, Wesley set out for Bristol, then in the tumult of an election, occasioned by the death of Mr. Beckford, the borough member, and threw his powerful influence into the scale in favour of the Honourable John Spencer, against his rival, Jarrett Smith. Having seen his favoured candidate returned by a large majority, he remained for some time in the neighbourhood discoursing to the several societies; on one occasion a press gang presenting itself while he was preaching in the open-air at Pill.

The thirteenth conference began in Bristol, August 26, 1756. The Wesleys and about fifty of the preachers were present. Christopher Hopper says: "It was a good season." The Rules of the Society were read and carefully considered one by one. The rules of Kingswood School were renewed and, unwise as they now appear to us, were pronounced "agreeable to Scripture and to reason." For some time, much to Charles Wesley's horror, several of the preachers had evidenced dissatisfaction with their undefined position, and a desire to formally break from the Church of England, and John, he feared, was tainted with the "heresy." This dissatisfaction on the part of the preachers had been excited by a withering satire on the Establishment, written by Edward Perronett, the son of Wesley's friend, the Vicar of Shoreham. Charles warmly demanded in the conference that the itinerants should solemnly promise never to separate from the Church, and refusing to do this should cease to be connected with them. It does not appear that the pledge was actually enforced,

but after a conversation on the subject, the Wesleys "closed the conference with a declaration never to separate from the Church, and all the brethren agreed therein." In this decision John Wesley proceeded on the principle that such a separation was lawful but inexpedient—inexpedient, because he knew that such a course would alienate his brother for ever from him, and cause disunion in the Societies. This, however, was only patching up a temporary peace: the change was inevitable.

From this time Charles Wesley virtually ceased to itinerate, confining his labours almost exclusively to Bristol and London, though the remaining records of his labours are very few. This change in his mode of life was partly due to his dissatisfaction with what he deemed the preachers' disloyalty to the Establishment, and partly to the increase of family cares. The differences of opinion on ecclesiastical questions which prevailed probably led to a stagnation in the spiritual work in the Bristol and neighbouring Societies. The Kingswood Society was standing still, and the Bristol Society was reduced from nine hundred to a little more than half that number. Observing this, Wesley, in October, 1757, held a solemn fast with the Society, and from that time the work revived. During this visit the Kingswood School caught fire, and narrowly escaped entire destruction. Though laid aside some days with swollen face, which he cured by "applying boiled nettles," Wesley found time to open a new preaching house at Pill and visit other Societies. In the following Christmas week he again rode down from London, and began the year 1758 with "the great congregation, at four, a.m., rejoicing and praising God."

The fifteenth Conference began in Bristol on the 10th of the following August. In all, about thirty-seven were present.

Several candidates for the itinerancy were received : one was declined until he ceased to "rail, to print, and sell wares without a license;" and poor Michael Fenwick, whom Wesley in his travels had found a better "groom, *valet de chambre* and nurse" than preacher, was recommended to return to business.* "You must," said Wesley to his helpers, "do one of three things : either spend time in chit chat, or learn Latin and Hebrew, or spend all your time and strength in saving souls. Which will you do?" And the earnest reply was given, "The last, by the grace of God." These points of discipline being settled, the remainder of the time was spent in a discussion on the doctrines of Justification and Sanctification. Of this Conference Christopher Hopper says, "It was a good season. God crowned our meeting with love and unanimity."

The day after the Bristol Conference closed its sittings, Wesley attended a performance of "Mr. Handel's Messiah," in the Cathedral, and was greatly pleased alike with "choruses and congregation." The following day, he started for a tour in Wales, duly returning from which, he spent some days with John Fletcher and several other preachers discussing the doctrine of "entire Sanctification." He also preached in the Broadmead Chapel to "great congregations;" and riding over to Bath, and "finding the house too small," he encouraged the people to take a piece of land and commence building a larger one without delay.

The following year, 1759, Wesley commenced in Bristol by visiting the Societies, and preaching a sermon for the poor. The great war was still proceeding, and more than a thousand French prisoners were immured in a prison which then stood near Totterdown. An extract from Wesley's journal will

* Appendix C.

show at once the wretched condition of the captives, and the practical religion of the early Bristol Methodists. "Monday, October 15.—I walked up to Knowle, a mile from Bristol, to see the French prisoners.* About eleven hundred of them, we were informed, were confined in that little place, without anything to lie on but a little dirty straw, or anything to cover them but a few foul thin rags, either by day or night, so that they died like rotten sheep. I was much moved, and preached in the evening on (Exodus xxiii. 9) 'Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' Eighteen pounds were contributed immediately, which were made up to four-and-twenty the next day. With this we bought linen and woollen cloth, which was made up into shirts, waistcoats, and breeches. Some dozen of stockings were added, all of which were carefully distributed where there was the greatest need. Presently after, the Corporation of Bristol sent a large quantity of mattresses and blankets; and it was not long before contributions were set on foot in London and in various parts of the kingdom, so that I believe from this time they were pretty well provided with all the necessaries of life." The contributions sent from London and other parts were doubtless the result of a powerful appeal in behalf of the prisoners published by Wesley in *Lloyd's Evening Post*. Twelve months later he visited the prisoners again, and once more made a collection to supply their most pressing needs.

The early part of 1760 Charles Wesley spent in London. Wesley's friend, the Countess of Huntingdon, was just then in deep distress by reason of the atrocious crime and felon's death of her kinsman, the Earl of Ferriers.† Charles was

* See Appendix D.

† See Appendix E.

present at his trial in the house of Lords, and did much to comfort his dishonoured relatives. John meanwhile was itinerating in Ireland, from which he hastened to the Bristol Conference, arriving there, through a series of misfortunes, about thirty-six hours after the appointed time. Of the Conference only a brief note has been preserved. Wesley says: "September 28th, 1760.—We pushed on to Newport, where I took a chaise, and reached Bristol before eleven. I spent the two following days with the preachers, who had been waiting for me all the week; and their love and unanimity was such as soon made me forget all my labour."

Three weeks later than the Conference Wesley again spent several weeks in Bristol and its vicinity. On Saturday, November 25, King George II. died at Kensington, and the following Friday was observed by the Society as a day of fasting and prayer for the blessing of God upon his successor, George III. The Bristol Methodists were evidently thriving, despite the war, and so Wesley solemnly warned them against the danger of riches and the spirit of the world. Some Pensford gentlemen had threatened to arrest the next Methodist preacher who should presume to set foot within the parish. Wesley rode over "to give them the opportunity," but not one of them appeared. In sooth, mob persecution was by this time dying out; but Wesley found opponents not less formidable in the falsehoods of a ribald press, the public ridicule of Foote and other comedians, and soon after in the millenarian fanaticism of George Bell, Thomas Maxwell (his old Bristolian preacher), and their excited followers.

The year 1761 appears to have been one of religious prosperity. In September Wesley found the Bristol Society larger than it had been for many years; and at Kingswood,

both the Society and School in a flourishing state. During this visit he preached to the prisoners in the jail, "was afterwards desired by the condemned prisoners to give them one sermon more," and also administered the sacrament to Patrick Ward, who soon after left in the hangman's cart for the gallows, "breathing a peace and joy beyond all utterance."

CHAPTER VIII.

"WORKERS TOGETHER WITH HIM."

Conference of 1764—John Martin—John Nelson—Captain Webb—Walpole on; Wesley—Conference of 1768—Alexander Mather—Dr. Wrangle, the King of Sweden's Chaplain—Death of George Whitefield.

EARLY in 1762 Wesley visited Bristol, and found its attention engrossed by the supposed bewitchment of "Molly and Dobby Giles," the children of the landlady of the "Lamb." Wesley, who from the time of the Epworth Rectory's ghostly rappings had, to say the least, an insatiable liking for what would now savour of spiritualistic *seances*, heard with wonder of the "scratchings on the windows and walls," and of the unequine vagaries of Giles the landlord's teams. In his Journal he asks, "How are they to be accounted for? By natural or supernatural agency?" Wesley's questions soon were answered. Yielding to the stern persuasion of a birchen rod, Molly and Dobby at last confessed the hocus pocus tricks by which, at the instance of their mother, who wished to buy the property, they had sought to depreciate the value of the "Lamb" by haunting it like spirits from the "vasty deep."

The Twenty-first Conference began in Bristol August 6, 1764. At this time Wesley found his position most embar-

rassing. Societies had been formed throughout the length and breadth of the land; and the members thereof were demanding their ecclesiastical rights to distinct sacramental ordinances. Hesitating himself as a presbyter to ordain, though convinced of his scriptural right to do so, and needing helpers in the administration of the sacraments, he had procured ordination for John Jones, an old Bristol preacher, and a few others, at the hands of Erasmus, Bishop of Arcadia in Crete, a Greek prelate then on a visit to this land. At this act, Charles Wesley, whose attachment to the Church of England increased with advancing years, was very wroth, and Jones was obliged to retire from the itinerancy. To remove his difficulties John had subsequently sent a circular letter to all the clergymen of the Establishment, inviting them to unite with him and with each other in holy efforts to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land. Of fifty or more clergymen thus addressed, only three were courteous enough to send him a reply. Failing in this attempt at union Wesley invited several of them to come and confer with him at the Bristol Conference. Twelve attended, and in the conversation which ensued, urged the carrying out of a scheme which had been suggested by a Cornish rector some years before, viz., “that in every parish in which there was a pious clergyman the societies formed there should be given up to his direction and oversight.” This proposition Charles Wesley was prepared heartily to accede to, but John firmly and respectfully declined. Charles had so far departed from his once noble stand against ecclesiastical monopoly as to declare that if he were the settled minister in any particular parish the Methodists should not preach therein. To this, outspoken John Hampson—the same who once was tempted to avenge Wesley’s wrongs on his virago wife—brusquely made reply:

"I *would* preach there and never ask leave, and should have as good a right to do so as you would have." The conversation with the clergy at the Bristol Conference only made the breach wider than before, and hastened the inevitable end of Methodist secession from the Church.

Four years passed away before a Bristol Conference met again. During this time the work was carried on by Preachers annually appointed—Wesley from time to time passing through the City and visiting the several surrounding Societies. Among the Bristol Preachers of this period were John Murlin and John Nelson. Murlin was widely known as the "Weeping Prophet," his tears being more eloquent than his words. Tender hearted as a little child he had also a lion's courage in the cause of truth. Withstanding Charles Wesley's ultra ecclesiasticism, he had four years before boldly administered the Sacrament at Norwich; and in after years, filled with iconoclastic fury against a carved archangel which the Halifax Methodists had placed upon the pulpit sounding-board, he literally hewed the "graven image" in pieces before the Lord and consumed it to ashes in the Chapel yard. Wesley's faithful follower in life, in death, they were re-united, and now their ashes mingle in the honoured tomb of City Road.

John Nelson is a name familiar in Methodism as household words. From among Wesley's faithful helpers he stands prominently forth, noblest, bravest, most successful of them all. In perils oft—he stood amid the wildest tumults of the people calm and unshaken as the rock lashed by the angry waves. Though but a stone mason by profession, he was one of nature's noblemen, and his native goodness was enriched and crowned by grace. Years before he had gathered hundreds into the Societies at "Paulton, Coleford, Shepton Mallet,

Road and Bearfield,” and in 1766 he was formally appointed to the Bristol Circuit. Eight years later a sobbing, singing host bore him through the crowded streets of Leeds to Birstal, and there, the place of his nativity and earliest ministrations, they laid the hero down to rest.

In September, 1765, Wesley visited Bristol, and on this occasion made the acquaintance of Captain Webb, who some months previously had been converted and joined the Society. Seven years before, scaling with General Wolfe the heights of Abraham, he had lost an eye and been wounded in the arm. From henceforth he proved as courageous in the cause of Christ as he had been in the service of his King. Almost immediately he began to preach, and being ordered soon after with his regiment to America, was one of the chief founders of Methodism in the Western Continent. Returning to England in 1783, he devoted himself to the work of an evangelist. Residing principally in Bristol, to him Methodism in this city is indebted to a great degree for the erection of Portland Chapel, and there his body lies interred.*

Toward the end of 1766, Wesley spent several weeks in Bristol and its vicinity, pursuing his usual work. At Bath he preached several times in the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel to distinguished pump-room visitors. Horace Walpole heard him there, and in his “Letters” thus speaks of him with his usual facetiousness:—“I have been at one opera—Mr. Wesley's. They have boys and girls with charming voices that sing hymns in parts to Scotch ballad tunes, but indeed so long that one would think they were already in eternity and knew not how much time they had before them. Wesley is a clean, elderly man, fresh coloured,

* Appendix F.

his hair smoothly combed, but with a little *soupcón* of curls at the end. Wondrous clever, but as evidently an actor as Garrick." To Walpole's insinuation of Wesley being an *actor* his whole life is an unanswerable and glorious contradiction. A letter from Charles Wesley to his wife in Bristol sent about this time affords a pleasant glimpse of John's ceaseless activity. "My brother, I presume, will look upon you on Wednesday se'nnight in his flight to the Land's End. He is an astonishing youth! and may be saluted like the eastern monarchs, 'O King, live for ever!'"

On Saturday, August 13, 1768, after six months ceaseless travelling, Wesley arrived in Bristol to attend the Conference. Hearing that his wife, who had not then finally left him, was seriously ill in London, he took postchaise at once, arriving at the Foundry about one o'clock on Monday morning. "Finding the fever was turned and the danger over" he left her within an hour and by rapid posting reached Bristol "not at all tired" the same afternoon. The Conference opened next morning and finished its sittings on the following Friday. The Bristol membership was returned at 1177, being an increase of nearly a hundred in the preceding year; the connexional membership as 27,341, being an increase of nearly sixteen hundred. The character and conduct of the preachers underwent a careful examination. To eke out their scanty income some had engaged in miniature mercantile pursuits, such as selling pills and other patent physic. Such were commanded to desist from "hawking drops, (though their wives might sell them at home)," and to relinquish other forms of business as unnecessary, *infra dig.* and dishonouring to the sacred office which they held. To promote their own as well as the interests of the Societies, they were urged to maintain the custom of early preaching. "Let the preaching,"

said Wesley, "at five in the morning be constantly kept up wherever you can have twenty hearers. This is the glory of the Methodists. Rising early is equally good for soul and body. It helps the nerves better than a thousand medicines, and in particular preserves the sight and prevents lowness of spirits more than can be well imagined." Discipline was to be steadily maintained and stewards changed more frequently "lest they should ride over the preachers' heads." Public singing in the Societies was to be reformed and cultivated. Musical repeats, especially *fugues*, having "no more of religion in them than in a Lancashire hornpipe," were to be carefully eschewed, and the "assistants," as the superintendents were then called, were to see that the "members of every large Society were taught to sing." Field preaching was to be efficiently maintained, the children of the Societies were to be looked after, and for the promotion of their own religious life the preachers were to read the life of David Brainerd, and to give themselves to fasting and to prayer. Twelve young men were received as probationers, among them "Sammy" Bardsley, who lived to be the oldest Methodist preacher of his day, and the memory of whose gentle, loving spirit is still fragrant in multitudes of homes.

A three years' interval elapsed ere the Conference was held in Bristol again. In that time the numerical increase in the circuit did not exceed a hundred. The most notable of the appointed preachers was Alexander Mather. Born in Brechin, in Scotland, Mather before he was thirteen ran away from his parents, followed "Prince Charlie," and passed through Culloden. Escaping from the pursuit he returned home, and some years later removed to London. There he was converted and joined the "Foundry Society." Soon after sent

by Wesley into the work, he walked a hundred and fifty miles to his first circuit, and for some years endured great hardships and indignities from the hands of lawless mobs. Clear-headed, wise in counsel, fearing the face of no man in the maintenance of truth and honour ; he was moreover distinguished for his pathetic eloquence and his tenderness toward the indigent and distressed. He commenced to travel in 1757, was ordained as an elder and superintendent by Wesley in 1788, was elected to the Presidency of the Conference in 1792, and died at the commencement of the present century.

During the brief period now reviewed, Wesley, according to his wont, cheered the Bristol preachers from time to time with his presence and genial smile. During his visits he preached daily in the Broadmead Chapel, in a room opened for worship in Princess Street, at Bedminster, and in the surrounding towns and villages. Discoursing at Whiteshill, near Bradford, "the beasts of the people" shouted in derision, and one "called a gentleman" having filled his pockets with rotten eggs, intending to pelt the preacher, a young man, approaching unawares, "clapped his hands on each side of him, and in an instant he was perfume all over ; though it was not so sweet as balsam."

Joseph Benson, afterwards so long and honourably associated with Methodism, was at this time classical tutor at Kingswood School, an office which he soon relinquished to take the head-mastership of Trevecca College, founded by Lady Huntingdon.

In 1770 the Wesleys, at the request of the Bristol Society, arranged for the administration of the Lord's Supper every other Sunday ; an arrangement involving considerable inconvenience, inasmuch as at that time the ordinance could only be administered by an Episcopal clergyman. About the same

time Wesley had much pleasant intercourse in Bristol with Dr. Wrangle, the King of Sweden's chaplain. The worthy Swede preached in the Broadmead Chapel, and delighted the Bristol Methodists with “the simplicity and life which accompanied his sound doctrine.” Returning soon after to his native land he disseminated Methodist teaching, and in Stockholm and other towns sowed precious seed, which more than half a century later was reaped by Joseph Rayner Stephens and Dr. Scott.

On Saturday, August 18th, 1770, Wesley stood in the shadow of St. Mary Redcliffe Church and warned of “wrath to come.” Just six days later poor Chatterton, the marvellous “Boy Bard of Bristol,” whose genius and career are so closely interwoven with St. Mary's, perished in his misery and pride. Wesley would feel for the hapless youth, whose brilliant sun so soon and so sadly set ; but five weeks later another genius died, whose departure more deeply affected him. Though born himself at “The Bell,” in Gloucester, Whitefield's mother was a Bristolian, and his father for some time carried on in that city the business of a wine and spirit merchant. In Bristol, too, he commenced his marvellous career as the greatest field preacher that ever lived. Much inferior to Wesley in intellectual power and academical distinctions—as an orator Whitefield had no peer. His was the soul of eloquence, and also the cultured art. By the witchery of his words—now impetuous as the cataract, now soft and plaintive as the summer breeze—sinners were startled into terror or were melted into tears. With a restlessness of zeal which knew no respite, he rushed over England and America, everywhere preaching to wondering multitudes, everywhere bowing men and women to the sovereignty of truth, until—like the sword whose keen

edge cuts through its scabbard—his noble soul suddenly escaped from its prisonage and soared to its reward. George Whitefield died at Newburyport in the United States, September 30th, 1770, just as the Sabbath sun was uprising from the neighbouring sea.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CALVINISTIC CONTROVERSY.

Calvinistic Controversy—Countess of Huntingdon—Conference of 1771—Fletcher, Toplady, and Thomas Olivers—Wesley's Calmness—Joseph Benson—John Pawson—Bishop Asbury and American Methodism.

THE period between the Bristol Conferences of 1768 and 1771 was one of great religious excitement, both political and ecclesiastical. Wilkes, the member for Middlesex, was committed to the King's Bench prison for stirring up sedition, a commitment which led to the "Massacre of St. George's Fields." To arrest the increasing spirit of democracy Wesley wrote his first political *brochure*, entitled "Free Thoughts on the present State of Political Affairs." In this production he somewhat strongly satirizes Wilkes, defends the character of the King, and warns that the prevalent agitation, unless arrested, would lead on to revolution and internecine war.

The Calvinian controversy at this time approached its culmination. The Conference Minutes of 1770 contained a Confession of Faith in which anti-calvinistic doctrines were conspicuously emphasized. This Confession gave great offence to the Calvinistic party. The Countess of Huntingdon branded it as "popery unmasked," and determined that all

who declined to disavow it should quit Trevecca College. Joseph Benson, the head-master, was accordingly dismissed ; and John Fletcher, the president, whose visits from time to time were like those of an angel of light, after nobly vindicating Wesley's teachings, respectfully withdrew. The Bristol Conference approached, and the Countess in co-operation with her chaplain, the Rev. Walter Shirley, sent a circular letter to all her Calvinistic friends, convening a meeting in the city at the time of the Conference, for the purpose of going *en masse* thereto and demanding from Wesley and his followers a formal recantation of their "dreadful heresies."

The Conference commenced its sittings Aug. 6, 1771. Wesley might have treated the threats of his opponents with merited contempt and closed the Conference doors against them, but ascertaining that their temper was somewhat mollified he gave them admittance on Thursday, two days after the opening. Shirley had done his best to muster a monster meeting ;—but, lo ! instead of a host only eight appeared, and two of them mere youths. After so many loud swelling words they might have expected ridicule ; but Wesley treated them with christian courtesy, explained the passages of the Minutes which had given such grave offence, signed with fifty-three of his itinerants a declaration of abhorrence of the doctrine of "justification by works," and then demanded from Mr. Shirley an acknowledgment that he had mistaken the meaning of the Minutes and his hearty agreement with the same. So ended the Bristol Conference in apparent peace.

The sword thus drawn, however, was not so quickly sheathed. Shirley, before the Conference met, had publicly accused ; Wesley's doctrines therefore required a public vindication. The vindication was ready in the first of

"Fletcher's Checks," which was immediately put through the press by Mr. William Pine, the publisher of "Felix Farley's Journal." Shirley endeavoured to answer Fletcher in his "Narrative" of the dispute, but was effectually silenced by a second "Check." The brothers Richard and Rowland Hill and Augustus Toplady now joined in the controversy, which called forth the third "Check" from Madeley. Walter Sellon, an accomplished curate, once one of Wesley's preachers, and Thomas Olivers, an itinerant, next hastened into the fray. Wesley, and Fletcher, and Sellon, as clergymen, were deemed by Toplady "foemen worthy of his steel," but that Olivers, a converted mechanic, a man who once had nursed a lapstone, should presume to come between "the wind and his nobility," was an offence as huge as the "slovenly unhandsome corse" to Hotspur's fragrance loving fop. Oliver forthwith was assailed with the most sarcastic references to his humble origin, but in a literal as well as proverbial sense Roland was met by Oliver; the "consecrated cobbler's" quarter-staff laid on as effectually as the vicar's burnished blade. And so for six long years the conflict waged, and then the smoke of battle clearing, disclosed the Arminian and Calvinistic hosts afar removed to meet in shock of war no more. During all this time, Wesley, assailed on every side, calmly went on his usual way, leaving the vindication of his character and teaching to God and his faithful followers. Had his opponents been content to impugn his doctrinal opinions they might have been excused, but they invaded his domestic privacy and thereby sought to ruin his reputation. Mrs. Wesley having obtained some letters belonging to her outraged husband, so altered them by interpolations as to convey a most false and dishonouring meaning. These, by the advice of some Calvinists, were to be sent to the "Morning Post," but their

publication was delayed through the wishes of one gentleman, who wished to give Wesley an opportunity of first answering for himself. Charles, horrified, hastened to his brother, who had engaged to take his niece, Sarah Wesley, to Canterbury on the following day, and begged him to defer his journey until the accusation had been disproved. "Brother" was John's reply, "when I devoted to God my ease, my time, my life, did I except my reputation? No, tell Sally I shall take her to Canterbury to-morrow." Wesley fulfilled his promise;—the letters were soon found to be mutilated forgeries;—and his reputation continued as untarnished as his trust in God was great.

Reverting to the Bristol Conference of 1771, two or three names, destined to Methodist renown are worthy of passing notice. Joseph Benson was received on trial, John Pawson was appointed to the Bristol Circuit, and Francis Asbury was set apart for the work in America.

Joseph Benson was received on trial. Dismissed as we have seen from Trevecca College for his fidelity to Wesley's doctrines, he repaired to Oxford University to complete his studies. Four years before, six Methodist students had been expelled from St. Edmund's Hall, for no fault save their piety; and scarcely better treatment awaited him. His tutor declined to sign his testimonials for Orders in the Church, and these obtained from other and higher sources, the Bishop of Oxford refused him ordination. Thenceforth he devoted himself to the toils and triumphs of the itinerancy. In appearance unpretentious—in intellect, Joseph Benson was a prince. Scholarly and critical—he rendered incalculable service to Methodist literature, and scarcely less so as a pulpit orator. Somewhat feeble and harsh in voice, disposed to expository and grave discourse—his appeals were sometimes overwhelm-

ing, startling his congregations as the morning blast of trumpets startles the slumbering hosts. By fifty years of faithful service, during which he filled the highest connexional offices, including twice the Presidential chair, he proved his fidelity to the trust reposed in him, and then found an honoured resting place amid the holy dead in the chapel yard of City Road.

John Pawson was appointed to the Bristol Circuit. Disinherited by his uncle for turning Methodist—Pawson early dedicated himself to the work of the itinerancy, and though oft exposed to temptation and heavy trial he never dishonoured the cause he so early and earnestly espoused. His preaching talents were not of the highest order, but so illumined and sanctified by grace that his words were ever words of power. His judgment clear, his administrative ability superior, his sanctity unquestioned—in the Connexional unsettledness which succeeded Wesley's death, he rendered much needed service, a service soon rewarded by his elevation to the Presidential Chair. John Pawson was the first itinerant who remained two years in the Bristol Circuit; ten years later he travelled there again; a third time early in the century; dying soon after a triumphant death.

Francis Asbury was appointed to labour in America. No appointment ever made by the Conference has been followed by more signal results. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore were there two years before; but the arrival of Asbury threw such impetus into the work, and so widespread and unwearied was his evangelizing wanderings that he may be justly called the Father of Methodism in the western world. At the time of his appointment American Methodism returned only three hundred and sixteen members: he lived to stand at the head of upwards of two hundred thousand members and seven hundred itinerants. "The History of Christianity" says

Dr. Abel Stevens, the Methodist historian, "affords not a more perfect example of ministerial and episcopal devotion than was presented in this great man's life. He preached almost daily for more than half a century. During most of this time he travelled with hardly an intermission, the North American Continent from north to south, and east to west, directing the growing hosts of his denomination with the skill and authority of a great captain. He entered the itinerant ministry in England when but seventeen years of age; he went to America in his twenty-sixth year and was ordained bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church when thirty-nine years old, at its organization in 1784. It has been estimated that in the forty-five years of his American ministry he preached about sixteen thousand five hundred sermons, travelled about two hundred and seventy thousand miles, presided over two hundred and twenty-four annual Conferences, and ordained more than four thousand preachers. His discrimination of character was marvellous, his administration would have placed him, in civil government or in war, by the side of Richelieu or Cæsar, and his success placed him unquestionably at the head of the leading characters of American ecclesiastical history. His attitude in the pulpit was solemn and dignified, his voice was sonorous and commanding, and his discourses were often attended with bursts of eloquence which spoke a soul full of love, and like a mountain torrent swept all before it. He preached his last sermon on the 24th of March, 1816, and seven days later he died at Spottsylvania."*

* Stevens' History of Methodism, iii. 258.

CHAPTER X.

“IN LABOURS MORE ABUNDANT.”

Wesley's Journeyings—Seventy-second Anniversary of his Birthday—
Conference 'of 1774—Joseph Bradford—Samuel Bradburn—
Robert Southey, the Poet Laureate.

UNDETERRED by the Calvinistic controversy then at its height, sending out only now and then, in the shape of a telling pamphlet, a Parthian shot, Wesley, between the Bristol Conferences of 1771 and 1774, pursued his accustomed way. Scouring the country from Scotland to Land's End his visits to Bristol were necessarily less frequent than in earlier times. In September, a few weeks after the Conference, he spent some time in the neighbourhood, preaching at Bath, Keynsham, Pensford, Shepton Mallet, Bedminster, in St. James' Barton, and on Bristol Quay. Kingswood School he found religiously depressed; a Penelope's web—the reactionary night unravelling what the reviving day had wrought. In the following March he spent a few comfortable days there *en route* to the North. There his incessant journeyings and exposure to all weathers brought on a severe illness; but after a few days rest he continued, though weak, his arduous work. At Halifax a ruffian struck him violently in the face, but the venerable saint turned to him

the other cheek, and overcome, the coward slunk away. In August the Conference was held in Leeds ; Wesley, in addition to conducting its business, preaching each evening and early morning. From the Conference, he travelled *via* Wales, on to Bristol, and spent the next ten weeks in its vicinity, preaching and visiting the several Societies. Thence through Shaftesbury, Salisbury, Winchester, Portsmouth, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, and Oxfordshire to London, where, in addition to his usual work, he laid himself out, by public appeals and private beneficence, to alleviate the distresses of the destitute in the prevailing dearth.

Though still in feeble health, Wesley spent the early part of the year in Ireland, preaching and giving physic to the poor ; thus like his Divine Master ministering to body and to soul. In August the Conference was held in London, at the close of which he undertook a tour through Cornwall, getting back to Bristol before the close of the month. There he became seriously unwell, but "after being electrified" felt much better and preached with tolerable ease. That his condition at this time created great anxiety among his friends we learn from a letter sent from Bristol by John Pawson soon after his visit. "Mr. Wesley" he wrote, "has been with us for some time. He seems to be declining very fast and I think there is grave reason to fear that he will not be with us long."

Soon after this Wesley underwent a painful operation which not only alleviated his sufferings, but effected a perfect cure. In a few weeks he was as active as ever in his work, and apparently as well. A remarkable instance of his activity and endurance occurred about this time. His Journal shall speak for him : Wednesday, March 30th, 1774. "I went on to Congleton where I received letters, informing me that my presence was necessary at Bristol. So, about one, I took

chaise and reached Bristol about half-an-hour after one the next day. Having done my business in about two hours, on Friday in the afternoon I reach Congleton again, about a hundred and forty miles from Bristol, no more tired (blessed be God !) than when I left it." Six months later than Wesley's double journey Edmund Burke, in his parliamentary zeal, posted from Malton to Bristol in forty-five hours, and the fact is chronicled as a most astounding feat. But here a septuagenarian accomplishes, considering his age and the unfavourable season of the year, a more remarkable journey—two hundred and forty miles over roads unmacadamized and haunted by highwaymen—and then, sitting down unwearied as when he started, he simply records the fact.

Three months later Wesley had completed his seventy-second year. Thus he entered in his Journal : " My birthday. How is it that I find the same strength that I did thirty years ago ? That my sight is considerably better now, and my nerves firmer than they were then ? That I have none of the infirmities of old age, and have lost several I had in my youth ? The grand cause is, the good pleasure of God who doeth whatsoever pleaseth Him. The chief reasons are,—

1. My constantly rising at four for about fifty years.
2. My generally preaching at five in the morning ; one of the most healthy exercises in the world.
3. My never travelling less, by sea or land, than four thousand five hundred miles in a year."

The thirty-first Conference commenced in Bristol on Tuesday, August the 9th, 1774, and concluded its sittings on the following Friday, the last day being devoted to fasting and prayer for the success of the gospel. On Wednesday evening says Thomas Taylor, one of the itinerants, Wesley preached an " indifferent sermon," on the following day he gave them

"a profitable discourse on brotherly love," and on Friday evening he expounded Matt. vii. 27, according to the testimony of Miss March, a lady hearer, "the prettiest and most simple discourse on that text" she ever heard. The Bristol Circuit numbers were returned at 1404, being an increase of nearly two hundred on the numbers given at the preceding Bristol Conference.

The temporal wants of the preachers were reported as very pressing. The claims of the married preachers were fully considered, and a resolution passed that "£12 should be allowed for every preacher's wife by the respective Circuits, in addition to lodgings, coals, and candles, or in lieu of these £15 a year additional." The number of preachers' wives to be provided for was forty-three, the provision being made apparently by a *pro rata* assessment on the members, two and a half "sisters" falling to the share of the Bristol Circuit, *viz.* :—"S. Christian, S. Bourke, and S. Cotty, *half*."

The wives being provided for, the claims of their children next called for the Conferential consideration. Complaints probably were made of the uncomely attire of the Kingswood boys, and hence it was resolved that if the parents could pay for their clothes in whole or in part they should do so. "Can nothing be done for their daughters?" was the next question asked and the reply was given: "If any of them were sent to Miss Owen's School, (perhaps the best boarding school for girls in Great Britain), they would keep them at as small an expense as possible." The School, of which Wesley speaks in such eulogistic terms, was held at Publow in the vicinity of Bristol. Wesley frequently visited it, and ever spoke in terms of highest admiration of the "lovely family" at its head and their method of tuition. Not until nearly a century later was adequate provision made for the education of preachers'

daughters by the opening of Schools at Beechholme, Five Elms, and Trinity Hall.

Five young men were admitted into full connection at this Conference, and fifteen received on trial. First among the former stands out the name of Joseph Bradford. At this time, and for many years after, Bradford was Wesley's travelling companion, nurse, and faithful friend. Once only for a moment did a cloud darken their happy intercourse, and then the beautiful condescension of Wesley so won his somewhat stubborn "helper," that thenceforth his attachment was greater than before. "Wesley directed him to carry a package of letters to the post ; Bradford wished to hear his sermon first ; Wesley was urgent and insisted ; Bradford refused ; ' then,' said Wesley, ' you and I must part.' ' Very good, sir,' replied Bradford. They slept over it. On rising the next morning Wesley, accosting his friend, asked him if he had considered what he had said, that ' they must part?' ' Yes, sir,' replied Bradford. ' And must we part?' enquired Wesley. ' Please yourself, sir,' was the reply. ' Will you ask my pardon?' rejoined Wesley. ' No, sir.' ' You wont?' ' No, sir.' ' Then I will ask yours !' replied the great man. Bradford melted under the example and wept like a child."

Joseph Bradford was with Wesley in his last days, and closed his eyes in death. He travelled in Bristol in 1795 and following two years, in the first of which he was President of the Conference. He was re-elected to the Presidency in 1803, and died in 1808.

In the list of probationers received appear the names of James Rogers and Samuel Bradburn. James Rogers was a man of heroic character and tireless activity. Devoted was his life and still more so the life of his saintly wife. Methodism has been rich in consecrated womanhood, and among

them all Hester Ann Rogers holds a foremost place. Friends and fellow-helpers of Wesley, they stood like Joseph Bradford beside his dying bed.

Samuel Bradburn is immortalized as the "Methodist Demosthenes." Born in the Bay of Biscay, and used in childhood to the stir of arms, his bearing was martial; and his eloquence, like the wild waves which rocked his infant sleep, now mounted into sublimities which filled his auditors with awe, now sunk into tender cadences which called forth sighs and tears. Witty, he was also wise; though at times somewhat eccentric and unreliable, his natural failings were amply redeemed by his splendid talents. He graced the Presidential Chair in 1799, Four years in all Bristol was favoured with his attractive ministry, during which time, arrayed in gown and bands he opened Portland Chapel. A soldier's son—he survived to hear the shoutings for the won field of Waterloo, dying soon after in the full assurance of faith.

The day on which the Bristol Conference of 1774 closed its sittings, a child was born in the home of a Wine Street linen draper, destined to be poet laureate of England, and historian of the man who on his natal day presided in the Broadmead preaching room. Robert Southey's "Life of Wesley," though brilliant, is defective and unfair. Wesley's life was too profoundly spiritual for mere poetic and philosophic powers to gauge. Southey misunderstood his motives, he censured his doctrinal teachings, he decried his success as tending to destroy the Establishment, but withal he had a genuine respect for the great Evangelist, and, had he lived, would have corrected the errors which marred the earliest edition of his Work. "I consider him" (this testimony of Southey's opinion of Wesley is preserved to us in 'Wilberforce's Correspondence') "as the most influential mind of the last

century, the man who will have produced the greatest effects centuries or perhaps millennians hence, if the present race of men should continue so long. Once at least Wesley and the future laureate met. "When I was a child," said Southey, "I was in a house in Bristol where Wesley was. On running downstairs before him with a beautiful little sister of my own, he overtook us on the landing, when he lifted my sister in his arms and kissed her. Placing her on her feet again, he then put his hand upon my head and blessed me ; and I feel," continued the bard, his eyes glistening with tears, and yet in a tone of grateful and tender recollection, "I feel as though I had the blessing of that good man upon me still."*

* Tyerman's "Life of Wesley "

CHAPTER XI.

"A FELLOW SERVANT IN THE LORD."

Parliamentary Contest — Experiences in Ireland — Westley Hall — Wesley introduced to Dr. Coke — Dr. Coke's Conversion, labours, and death.

THE Conference of 1774 closed on Friday, August 12th; and a month later, after a tour in Wales and Cornwall, Wesley was in Bristol again, and remained several weeks in the vicinity. His time was spent in the usual way—preaching and pastorizing among the people.

The city was again passing through the commotion of a political contest, Lord Clare, Henry Cruger, Matthew Brickdale, and the great Edmund Burke, were the parliamentary candidates. The excitement was intense. On Thursday, October 6th, Wesley met the voters of the Society "and advised them, 1.—To vote, without fee or reward, for the person they judged most worthy: 2.—To speak no evil of the person they voted against: and 3.—To take care their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side."

On the following Sunday he preached in the "New Square," as King's Square was then called. "It was a fruitful season," he says, "soft fell the word as rain into a fleece of wool."

The next six months were spent in London, amid the excitement caused by the intelligence of the rebellion of the

aggrieved American Colonists. At first Wesley seemed to have leaned towards the Colonists, but the study of Dr. Johnson's famous pamphlet "Taxation no Tyranny," brought him round to the Government side, and, forthwith, he threw his powerful influence into the conservative scale. Travelling from town to town, he exhorted the Societies to "fear God and honour the king;" he sent letters on the subject to *Lloyd's Evening Post*; and under the title of "A calm address to the American Colonies," he re-produced Dr. Johnson's "Taxation no Tyranny" in a condensed form. This pamphlet created a considerable sensation, and called forth almost countless pamphlets in reply. Among his antagonists, the Rev. Caleb Evans, (the pastor of Broadmead Baptist Chapel,) took a prominent part. In an angry letter sent to *The Gazetteer*, he branded Wesley as a renegade in principle, and as a plagiarist--a charge which Toplady afterwards more emphatically and indecently affirmed in his pamphlet "The Old Fox tarred and feathered." Wesley calmly answered the Rev. Caleb Evans and his other antagonists,—then proceeded on his way.

The summer months of 1775 Wesley spent in Ireland visiting the societies, and preaching day after day. The journal of this tour is full of interest, as exhibiting his unwearied labours, and the alternate exaltation and abasement to which he was exposed. Now assisting the Dean in the administration of the Communion in the Cathedral of St. Patrick; and now holding forth "in the most foul, horrid, miserable hole" he had seen since leaving England; now waiting on Lady Moira, and noting the splendours of her mansion; and now resting in the rude cabins of the country side; now "spending two or three hours in one of the loveliest places and with one of the loveliest families in the kingdom;" and now

finding neither man, woman, or child " among a " gaping and staring " crowd to direct him to the meeting house, or to a place of rest ; now rejoicing that his word had fallen like " rain upon the grass ; " and now regretting that he " could not reach his hearers' hearts. " So runs the record of his labours in the west. In Ireland, Wesley was prostrated by sickness, brought upon himself by sleeping at noon in an orchard—a brief *siesta* in which, as a very early riser, he had indulged for forty years. A few weeks before, " garlic applied to the soles of his feet " had proved effectual in removing hoarseness ; and still believing in quaint and simple remedies, he drank copiously of " treacle and water, " and wrapped his feet in treacle poultices. But this time " primitive physic " was ineffectual, and his malady increased. A physician was called in, and his life despaired of ; when an emetic draught, administered by Joseph Bradford, aroused the dormant energy of his constitution, and in a few days he was well enough to start for Conference, the last symptoms of his sickness being driven away by his being " well electrified, during a four or five hours drive over very rugged, broken roads. "

On January 2nd, 1776, Wesley was again in Bristol. Thither he had been pressed to come by the preachers of the circuit, in order to calm the political excitement which had crept into the society over the great trans-atlantic struggle. He had, also, a solemn task of a family nature. Keziah, his accomplished sister, the friend of Dr. Johnson, had, nearly forty years before, married Westley Hall, one of Wesley's Oxford friends and fellow students. Hall fell into erroneous opinions and immoral habits ; brought disgrace upon the church at Salisbury of which he was the pastor ; abandoned his wife and family ; became a deist, and for many years lived a life of sin and misery. He died at Bristol, December

28th, 1775. Wesley says "I came just in time, not to see, but to bury poor Mr. Hall, my brother-in-law, who died on Wednesday morning, I trust, in peace; for God had given him deep repentance. Such another monument of divine mercy, considering how he had fallen, and from what height of holiness, I have not seen, no, not in seventy years! I had designed to visit him in the morning, but he did not stay for my coming. It is enough, if, after all his wanderings, we meet again in Abraham's bosom."

Leaving Bristol, Wesley continued his accustomed itinerations through Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, and Shropshire, accompanied by John Fletcher, then in very enfeebled health. Travelling does not seem to have greatly benefited the holy vicar of Madeley, and leaving Wesley he spent some time at the Hotwells to regain if possible his strength. Wesley rejoined him in August, and finding him somewhat better, wished to take him into Cornwall, but Fletcher's physicians would not consent. Proceeding alone, Wesley reached Taunton, and there formed an acquaintance destined to be most influential in the spread of religion throughout the world. Wesley thus records it in his journal: "I preached at Taunton, and afterwards went with Mr. Brown to Kingston. The large old parsonage house, so pleasantly situated, close to the churchyard, just is fit for a contemplative man. Here I found a clergyman, Dr. Coke, late Gentleman Commoner of Jesus College, in Oxford, who came twenty miles on purpose. I had much conversation with him; and an union then began which I trust will never end."

Thomas Coke, D.D., the only child of wealthy parents, was born at Brecon, in 1743. In his seventeenth year he entered the University. Having obtained his degree, and received his ordination, he entered upon the Curacy of South Petherton, in

the County of Somerset. Earnest, but as yet unevangelical—an interview with Thomas Maxfield inspired him with clearer light; sincere, but as yet unsaved—the conversation of an untutored class-leader led him to the cross.

The change thus realised was soon revealed. The light of the new-born life shone forth so brilliantly that South Pether-ton was astonished at the change. Found guilty of preaching from night to night, of ingathering sinners into the fold, and other ecclesiastical irregularities, he was soon charged with Methodist madness, and endured all the scorn and opposition which that opprobrious charge entailed.

Admonished by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, and threatened by the parishioners, he was at length discharged by the rector from his curacy. Thus dismissed, he rode out of the parish amid the ringing of bells and drunken revelry, in honour of his departure. He had before, as we have seen, had an interview with Wesley, and now he resolved to throw in his lot with the great evangelist, and become in deed, as he had been in name before, a Methodist minister.

This decision was opportune, and ordered undoubtedly by God for the further development of Methodistic enterprise. Wesley had organised it, Fletcher had defined its evangelical theology, Charles Wesley had provided its peerless psalmody; but the Wesleys were growing old, Fletcher was in failing health, Macedonian voices were heard from America and other parts calling aloud for help, and Thomas Coke was the chosen one for the pressing emergency.

Dr. Coke was short of stature; his voice was feminine; but his soul was great and noble. In 1784, he was ordained by Wesley superintendent or bishop of the Methodist societies in America; but a diocese co-extensive with the great Republic was too straitened for his world-

wide sympathies and zeal. Eighteen times he crossed the Atlantic at his own expense to fulfil the duties of his Methodist episcopal degree, and, moreover, he had the almost entire control of Methodist missions in Ireland, Wales, the West Indies, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland. Twice—in 1797 and 1805, he filled the office of Connexional President. In 1814, though more than seventy years of age, he set sail with several young ministers for India, but he died ere the voyage was completed, and in the Indian Ocean his remains were committed to the deep.

Returning from Cornwall, Wesley spent a month in Bristol and its neighbourhood. In Bristol he read prayers and preached; he also visited the Society from house to house, and "was surprised to find the simplicity with which one and all spoke, both of their temporal and spiritual state." In King's Square the Word of God was quick and powerful. To the Paddock at Bedminster the people flocked from every quarter. At Midsomer-Norton the Rector granted him the use of his church. At Bath he preached "as usual to a crowded audience," at Paulton "to a plain, simple loving people," at Frome to "a listening multitude," and under the trees at Kingswood "to such a multitude as he had not lately seen there." Having visited the "rest of the Societies in Somersetshire, Wiltshire, and Hants, he returned to London with Mr. Fletcher."

Early in January 1777, Bristol was alarmed by several conflagrations, evidently the work of an incendiary. Several warehouses were burned down, and an attempt was made to destroy the shipping, but the damage was confined to a single vessel. For this outrage the partizans of the rebellious Americans were blamed, and great consternation prevailed, special patrols were appointed and the city had the appearance

of a siege. The incendiary was at length discovered in John Aitkin, *alias* "Jack the Painter," a wretched criminal, who in America had learned to hate his mother country. During his custody he confessed to having set fire to Portsmouth Dockyard the year before. Aitken was hung in the following March.

The conviction that these and other disturbances had arisen from indirect colonial influences, intensified the political differences which then prevailed. Wesley hearing of the disturbance "occasioned by men whose tongues were set on fire against the Government," went down in the "Diligence" and strongly enforced the solemn words, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to speak evil of no man." He also wrote whilst there "A Calm address to the Inhabitants of England"—a tract as pungent in its style as it is intensely loyal in politics.

In the month of March, Wesley was again in Bristol, and the old persecution having almost entirely passed away, he preached in St. Werburgh's* and St. Ewen's Churches. Leaving for London on Monday, April 21st, he laid the foundation stone of the City Road Chapel in the presence of multitudes, though the rain "befriended them much by keeping away thousands who purposed to be there." Soon after he set out on extensive travels in the Northern and Midland Counties, returning to Bristol in the latter end of July.

On Friday, August 1st, 1777, Wesley held with the Bristol Society, a solemn season of fasting and prayer, that God would restore the spirit of love and of a sound mind to the poor deluded rebels in America.

Five days later the thirty-fourth Conference commenced.

* Vide Appendix G.

The aggregate membership of the Connexion was reported as 33,274, an apparent loss of 1,555, but a real gain of 1,351, inasmuch as the American numbers were not returned. For the first time obituary notices of preachers were presented, but in the most laconic form. "John Slocomb, at Clones, an old labourer, worn out in the service; John Harrison, near Lisburn (a promising youth, serious, modest, and much devoted to God); William Lumley, in Hexham (a blessed young man, a happy witness of the full liberty of the children of God); and William Minethorp, near Dunbar (an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile.)"—these had passed away.

Some of the preachers it had been rumoured had "taken money for their wives who did not want it"—this was declared an absolute slander; some, too, had been pronounced as clownish—this they were urged to cure. There had been a wide-spread report that Methodism was declining, and that the Methodists were a fallen people. This was serious, and called for a careful investigation of the Societies. Every "Assistant" was required to give an account of the work of God in his circuit, and the result was declared to be satisfactory, and the report altogether false. To this decision one only took exception. John Hilton, the Superintendent of the Bristol circuit, insisted that the report was no mere idle rumour, and that in consequence he had resolved to retire from the itinerary. Several of his old associates attempted to inspire him with more hopeful views, but Wesley perceiving it to be labour lost, bade him go in peace. Hilton was probably depressed by a diminution of seventy-five members in the Bristol circuit; and, moreover, his principles had been unsettled some time before, by reading "Barclay's apology." Converted to Quakerism, he forthwith joined the Society of Friends. The

Conference, with this exception, seems to have been characterized by Christian unanimity. Wesley says. "the Conference concluded on Friday as it began, in much love." During the Conference, preaching services were held daily. The Broadmead service on the Sunday lasted, in the morning, from half-past nine till one o'clock ; at five, Wesley preached again to a large congregation out of doors ; and at night he held a Society meeting, at which "he expatiated upon the rules and said many useful things."

CHAPTER XII.

“SICK AND IN PRISON.”

Fletcher's Sickness—Remarkable Conference Scene—Lord's Supper in a Stable—Missions to Africa—Unlawful Distilling—Silas Told—His Labours in Newgate.

FOR some months, in 1777, Fletcher, in shattered health, had been the guest of Mr. Ireland, an influential Methodist residing at Brislington; though ill he made an effort to attend the Conference.

Joseph Benson, who was present says—“Mr. Fletcher's visit to-day and yesterday have been attended with a blessing. His appearance, his exhortations and his prayers, broke most of our hearts, and filled us with shame and self-abasement *for our little* improvement. He happened to be passing the door of the stable belonging to our chapel in Broadmead, when I was alighting from my horse; and I shall never forget with what a heavenly air and sweet countenance he instantly came up to me in the stable, and, in the most solemn manner, putting his hand upon my head as if he had been ordaining me for the sacred office of the ministry, prayed most fervently for, and blessed me in the name of the Lord.”*

* Fletcher's Works, I, 234.

Tyerman also gives a graphic account :—

“On the third day of the Conference, pale, emaciated, and bowed down, Fletcher entered the Conference, leaning upon the arm of his host, Mr. Ireland. In an instant the whole assembly stood up, and Wesley advanced to meet his almost seraphic friend. The apparently dying man began to address the brave itinerants, and, before he had uttered a dozen sentences, one and all were bathed in tears. Wesley, fearing that Fletcher was speaking too much, abruptly knelt at his side and began to pray. Down fell the whole of Wesley's preachers and joined in the devotion of their great leader. The burden of Wesley's supplication was, that his friend might be spared to work a little longer ; and this petition was urged with such fervency and faith, that, at last, Wesley closed by exclaiming with a confidence and an emphasis which seemed to thrill every heart, ‘He shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.’ The event verified Wesley's words, for although the pilgrim was already walking on the margin of the river of death, and had heaven's own sunshine shining on him, it was not until eight years after that he passed the gates of the celestial city.”*

Another touching incident, illustrative of Fletcher's sanctity, occurred at Brislington a few weeks later. “In August, 1777,” says Mr. James Rogers, “I was appointed to leave Edinburgh, and labour in the east of Cornwall. I had long desired to converse with that great and good man, Mr. Fletcher ; and now an opportunity offered itself. Stopping at Bristol for a few days to rest myself and horse, I heard of his being at Mr. Ireland's, about three miles off, in a poor state of health, and with two of my brethren went to see him.

* Tyerman's “Life and Times of Wesley,” Vol. III., page 246.

When we came there he was returning from a ride, which he was advised by his physician to take every day. Dismounting from his horse, he came towards us with arms spread open, and eyes lifted up towards heaven. His apostolic appearance, with the whole of his deportment, amazingly affected us.

"The first words he spoke, while yet standing in the stable by his horse, were a part of the sixteenth chapter of St. John, most of which he repeated. And whilst he pointed out the descent of the Holy Ghost as the great promise of the Father and the privilege of all New Testament believers, in a manner I had never heard before, my soul was dissolved into tenderness, and became even as melting wax before the fire. After a little further conversation upon the universal love of God in Christ Jesus, we were about to take our leave, when Mr. Ireland sent his footman into the yard with a bottle of red wine and some slices of bread upon a waiter. We all uncovered our heads while Mr. Fletcher craved a blessing upon the same, which he had no sooner done but he handed first the bread to each, and lifting up his eyes to heaven pronounced those words, 'The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.' Afterwards, handing the wine, he repeated in like manner, 'The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.' But such a sacrament I never had before. A sense of the Divine presence rested upon us all, and we were melted into floods of tears. His worthy friend, Mr. Ireland, grieved to see him exhaust his little strength by so much speaking, took him by the arm and almost forced him into the house, while he kept looking wistfully, and speaking to us as long as we could see him. We then mounted our horses and rode away. That very hour more than repaid me for my whole journey from Edinburgh to Cornwall."*

* Benson's "Life of the Rev. John Fletcher," Vol. I., page 235.

The Conference of 1777 concluded,—Wesley left for London, where he at once drew up proposals for the “Arminian Magazine.” A week later he passed through Bristol *en route* for Cornwall, where he culminated his arduous labours by preaching to several thousands in Gwennap pit. Hearing of serious disturbances in the Dublin Society, he chartered a small sloop to convey him and a companion thither, and returning in the same manner, encountered a tempest, which carried away “the bowsprit, and tore one of the sails to tatters.” The remainder of the year was spent in labours equally abundant. On Wednesday, December 17, he preached in the early morning in Bristol, and after breakfast took chaise for Bath. There, at one o'clock, he laid the foundation stone of the new chapel, and though “the wind was piercing cold,” preached in the open air. After discoursing again at night he took chaise for London, arriving in safety the following afternoon. At this time the Bath road was more than usually dangerous, the post-chaise drivers having combined, for purposes of robbery, to deliver their passengers into each other's hands. “In consequence” of this, says Wesley, “many were robbed, but I had a good Protector still. I have travelled all roads by day and night for these forty years, and never was interrupted yet.”

The political excitement of the country, consequent upon the American war and other national complications, was followed in 1778 by a general depression. Men's hearts failed them for very fear, and it was thought that the country was on the brink of ruin. As patriotic as he was pious—Wesley by his preaching and by his pen, calmed the fears of the people, and laughed to scorn the very thought that by any combination of enemies England could ever be overthrown. In March he found the political panic as great in Bristol as

elsewhere ; but, visiting the Society, he was glad to find a "good increase." This prosperity he attributed to having himself chosen the Bristol preachers at the previous Conference,—“plain men, and likely to do more good than had been done in one year for twenty years before.” The preachers thus eulogised were John Goodwin, Thomas Carlill, and John Pritchard.

In August, the Conference was held in Leeds. At it, the question of establishing a mission in Africa was discussed at considerable length. This discussion arose from a request preferred by two young princes of Calabar, on the Coast of Africa. Stolen in childhood from their native shores, they spent seven years in American slavery, and then escaped to England. “The Emancipation Act” had not then been passed, but, appealing to Lord Mansfield they were set at liberty. They remained in Bristol for some time, receiving instruction from members of the Wesleyan society. After their return to Africa, they forwarded letters strongly desiring teachers to be sent. Two young Germans—members of the Broadmead Society—went forth ; but they both died almost ere they reached the shore. Two other young men immediately offered themselves for the dangerous enterprise ; but the matter having been considered by the Conference, it was concluded that the time for sending missionaries to Africa had not arrived.

In September Wesley was again in Bristol, and had on Sunday “a comfortable opportunity at the room in the morning as well as at the square in the afternoon,” Reports had reached him “that above a hundred in our Society were concerned in unlawful distilling.” The classes were carefully examined, and the hundred dwindled down to two. These distillers being expelled, under the influence of angry feeling,

expressed a wish for Wesley's death. Charles Wesley visiting in Bristol a few weeks later, heard of this, and immediately composed the following hymn, which, at his dictation, was sung in the Society meeting:—

Jesus, thy hated servant own,
And send thy glorious spirit down,
In answer to our prayers;
While others curse, and wish him dead,
Do thou thy choicest blessings shed,
And crown his hoary hairs.

Not for his death but life we pray,
In mercy lengthen out his day,
Our venerable guide;
Long MAY HE LIVE thy flock to keep,
Protect from wolves thy lambs and sheep,
And in his bosom hide.

Long MAY HE LIVE to serve thy cause,
To spread the victory of thy cross,
To minister thy grace,
And late to increase thy church in heaven,
With all the children thou hast given,
Appear before thy face.

Thou, God, that answerest by fire,
With fervent faith and strong desire,
Whom we present to thee,
Fill with pure love his ravish'd breast,
And let the spirit of glory rest
On all thy church—and me !

Me, me, thy meanest messenger,
Admit his happiness to share,
And intimately one,
Through life, through death, together guide,
To sing with all the sanctified
Around thy azure throne.

On Sunday, November 1st, Wesley opened the new City Road Chapel; and on Sunday, December 30th, he "buried what was mortal of honest Silas Told."

Silas Told was born in Bristol in 1711. His father was a physician, but the boy having a desire for the sea, at fourteen years of age was bound apprentice as a sailor. Many years he followed this pursuit, living a life of adventurous romance. His perils of waters were most appalling; his descriptions thereof, with the years he spent among the horrible atrocities of the slave trade, are of fascinating interest. Wearied at length of his wanderings he settled down to honest life. Induced by a pious youth in his employ to hear Wesley at the Foundry, he was converted, and with his wife soon joined the Society. Henceforth, his life was marked by Christian usefulness; and among the felons of London he did a work unsurpassed in the annals of prison philanthropy. It was an age of Draconic harshness. For what now would be punished as petty larceny, men and women were driven by scores in the hangman's cart, through scoffing crowds, to the gallows tree at Tyburn. Moving like a good angel in and out among the hapless ones, often riding with them to the place of death, Told sustained them in their sorrow, and pointed them effectually to the Saviour of the world. "Turnkeys, sheriffs, hangmen, wept as they witnessed his exhortations and prayers. They sent for him when new cases occurred, which his tireless zeal had not yet discovered. They opened passages through the clamorous and ribald crowds to the gallows for him; hardened men as they usually were, they came to know and love him as the good Samaritan, whom death alone could separate from the objects of his sympathy." Bristol has reason to be proud of the philanthropists associated with her by birth or by beneficence; but scarcely second to any, stands forth the Bristol physician's son—"honest Silas Told."

CHAPTER XIII.

"MURMURINGS AND DISPUTINGS."

Opening of New Chapel at Bath—National Depression—John Valton—Alexander McNab—Dispute at Bath—The Gordon Riots—Conference of 1780—C. Wesley Depressed—John Cricket—Fletcher at Brislington.

ON March 14th, 1779, Wesley opened the new chapel at Bath, discoursing on the occasion from "We preach Christ crucified—to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." Six months elapsed before he was in the neighbourhood again—months spent in writing and successful labour in London and the North. On Sunday, Sept. 29th, "one of the hottest days he had ever known in England," he preached and administered the Sacrament to "a very large number of communicants," and, in the afternoon had "a warm journey" to Kingswood, to visit a dying man.

The war panic still prevailed, France and Spain were now allied with the Americans, 'gangs were actively employed in pressing for the navy, and the prospect was ominous; but still calm in his confidence of God's favouring providence, Wesley preached on the Bristol Quay on Sunday, March 5th, from "The Lord sitteth above the water floods, the Lord remaineth King for ever." On Monday he discoursed with

reference to the political intrigues then prevailing, from David's prayer, "Lord, turn the counsel of Ahitophel into foolishness." Having spent some days among the neighbouring Societies, he preached again in Bristol on the following Sunday, and several times during the week. The work at Fishponds had been remarkably dead for many years, but had been quickened by the prayers and efforts of "that saint of God, Bathsheba Hall." Discoursing on Thursday in the Broadmead-room, one sat behind him, who, formerly one of the masters at Kingswood, had amassed, by commerce, considerable wealth. "Mr. Spencer," so runs the record in the Journal, designed to do much good,—after his death. "But God said unto him, 'Thou fool!' Two hours after, he died intestate, and left all his money to be scrambled for! Reader, if you have not done it already, make your *will* before you sleep!

The preachers appointed by the Conference of 1779 to Bristol were, Alexander McNab, John Valton, and John Bristol. Valton had been trained in France as a Romanist; and in early life, as an acolyte, had attended on the services of the altar. Whilst occupying an important military position at Runfleet, he was brought under Methodist influence, and savingly converted. Commencing to preach as a local preacher, he soon made his mark as a "revivalist." By the urgent request of Wesley he entered the itinerancy in 1775. He died in 1794, and is chronicled in the obituary of the minutes as a "plain, convincing, powerful preacher; a pattern of holiness, of charity, and of zeal."

Alexander McNab, the "Assistant" of the Circuit, was also a man of considerable note. His intellectual gifts were superior; his utterance copious and attractive. The consciousness of his power and popularity made him somewhat impatient of contradiction and ecclesiastical restraints. Soon after his

appointment to the Bristol Circuit, the Rev. Edward Smyth, a clergyman of the Established Church, took his wife to Bath—then a part of the Bristol Circuit—for the benefit of her health. Smyth having been distinguished as an earnest and successful minister, Wesley requested him to preach in the Chapel every Sunday evening during his sojourn in that city. This, McNab [as the Assistant or Superintendent of the Circuit absolutely objected to, affirming that he received his appointment “not from Wesley but from the Methodist Conference,” and that he “would not suffer the clergy to ride over the lay preachers’ heads.” Hearing of the doings of his refractory follower, Wesley and his brother Charles at once repaired to Bath, and calling together the excited and divided Society, he reminded them that the rules [of the itinerancy had been fixed by him before any Conference existed, and that in accepting those rules every lay preacher had pledged himself to preach when and where his Chief appointed. The excitement had spread to Bristol, and Wesley held another meeting there, similar to the one he had held at Bath. Then calling together the preachers of the circuit, and neighbourhood, he informed McNab that if he did not agree with the existing fundamental rules he could not be continued in the itinerancy. McNab appears to have submitted for the time to Wesley’s overstrained authority ; but a few years later he retired and became the pastor of a Congregational Church. The matter however caused considerable evil in the Bath Society, and would have done so in Bristol, but for the soothing counsels of Dr. Coke. Months after the affair, the following entry appears in Wesley’s Journal. “A year ago, there was such an awakening in Bath as never had been from the beginning, and in consequence of it, a swift and large increase of the Society. Just then Mr. McNab, quarrelling

with Mr. Smyth, threw wildfire among the people, and occasioned anger, jealousies, judging each other, backbiting and tablebearing without end, and in spite of all the the pains which have been taken, the wound is not healed to this day."

The year 1780 dawned darkly and disastrously upon the land. War had wrought its accustomed works of want and misery. Popery had received parliamentary concessions, which provoked the protestant feeling of the people and produced the horrors of the Gordon Riots.* The tumult over, and its excited leader Lord George Gordon immured in the tower—by his repeated request Wesley visited him, and had a lengthened conversation on "popery and religion" which he hoped would prove a lasting blessing to the prisoner.

In March, 1780, Wesley went to Bristol "and enjoyed much peace among a quiet loving people;" he "examined the society, and had reason to rejoice over them," In July, just before the Conference, he was at Bath relieving the strain of his ceaseless duties by critically examining "Raphael's Cartoons," and expiating on the floral wonders of "one of the greatest curiosities in the vegetable kingdom—the Nightly Cereus."

The Thirty-seventh Annual Conference began in Bristol, August 1st, 1780. Wesley says concerning it—"We have been always, hitherto, straitened for time. It was now resolved: "For the future we allow nine or ten days for each conference, that everything, relative to the carrying on of the work of God, may be maturely considered.'" In the unavoidable absence of Wesley during a part of the sittings, Christopher Hopper was appointed to fill the chair. Hopper in his autobiography, says "Our brethren made me president

* Appendix H.

in Mr. Wesley's absence. A poor helpless worm ! Superintendent ! President !—Great words ! I doubt we have not grace to bear them." The usual disciplinary investigation was faithfully adhered to. A misunderstanding had occurred during the previous year, between Joseph Benson and Dr. Coke on doctrinal grounds, and the settlement of the matter created considerable interest. Benson had been somewhat unguarded in his theological definition, and Dr. Coke charged him with having embraced the Arian heresy. Benson denied the charge and challenged investigation. A nominal committee met ; fully exonerated Benson from all blame, and the accuser and accused publicly shook hands in token of reconciliation.

A considerable time was expended in the revision of the minutes of Conferences already held. The relation of Methodism to the Church was again discussed. The conviction was increasing year by year, that Methodism had its own appointed place—its own defined ecclesiastical status outside of the Established Church ; and as the preachers increased in number and influence, they evidenced the courage of their convictions. The Wesley brothers both were there—there with widely different feelings. To John, healthy and hopeful—the outlook was bright ; to Charles, diseased in body and desponding in mind—it was dark and most depressing. John spent the interval of the Conference in preaching in King's Square and on Redcliffe Parade ; Charles, in brooding over the degeneracy which dared to contemplate the possibility of disunion from the Church. John, as soon as the conference was concluded, set out for Cornwall, there pursuing his usual course of holy toil ; Charles sat down and, inspired by the melancholy Muse, sought relief in the following sacred song :—

Why should I longer, Lord, contend,
 My last important moments spend
 In buffeting the air ?
 In warning those who will not see,
 But rest in blind security,
 And rush into the snare ?

Prophet of ills why should I live,
 Or let my sad forebodings grieve,
 Whom I can serve no more ?
 I only can their loss bewail,
 Till life's exhausted sorrows fail,
 And the last pang is o'er.

Here then I quietly resign
 Into those gracious hands divine,
 Whom I received from thee,
 My brethren and companions dear,
 And finish with a parting tear
 My useless ministry.

Detach'd from every creature now
 I humbly at thy footstool bow,
 Accepting my release ;
 If thou the promised grace bestow,
 Salvation to thy servant show,
 And bid me die in peace.

At the conference of 1780 eleven probationers were received ; the name of John Cricket standing the first upon the list. Cricket was a man of marked eccentricity : the stories of his simplicity still survive to beguile the hours of pleasant evening intercourse, or “to set the table in a roar.” Unsophisticated to an astonishing degree, apparently unable to understand the ordinary conventionalities of society, he was, withal, a man of unaffected piety and of pulpit power. Eccentric to the last—a day or two before he died, when urged to have further medical

aid he replied, "It is of no use ; I tell you I am going home ; my work is done."

Returning from Cornwall in September, Wesley spent several weeks in Bristol and its vicinity. On Sunday, September 3rd, he preached three times in Bath, and on Monday the 11th again ; his congregation on that occasion being augmented by one of the parliamentary members having given an ox to be roasted whole, and heavy rain having spoiled the sport. On Thursday the 7th, he "preached to a large and serious congregation at Chew Magna;" Thursday the 14th, in Clutton Church ; Wednesday the 20th, in the market place at Pill, to "the most stupid congregation he had lately seen ;" and on Sunday the 24th, in Temple Church, "the most beautiful and most ancient in Bristol." Thus, in ceaseless activities the year rolled onward to its close, terminating in a narrow escape of the new chapel in City Road. "Waking between one and two in the morning," so writes Wesley in his journal, "I observed a bright light shine upon the chapel. I easily concluded there was a fire near, probably in the adjoining timber-yard. If so, I knew it would soon lay us in ashes. I first called all the family to prayer ; then going out, we found a fire about a hundred yards off, which had broke out while the wind was south. But a sailor cried out, "Avast ! Avast ! the wind is turned in a moment !" So it did, to the west, while we were at prayer, and so drove the flame from us. We then thankfully returned, and I rested well the residue of the night."

Wesley began the year 1781 by an early morning service ; "praising him who maugre all his enemies had brought him safe to the beginning of another year."

His nephews Charles and Samuel Wesley, both Bristolians by birth, had at this time attracted great attention by their

musical genius. Charles Wesley, to encourage his sons, opened his house for a series of select performances, at which the *elite* of London, including the nobility were present. On January 25, Wesley says “I spent an agreeable hour at a concert of my nephews. But I was a little out of my element among lords and ladies. I love plain music and plain company best.”*

In March, after an adventurous journey from London, Wesley was again in Bristol. On Sunday the 18th, he preached in the chapel, and at night in Temple church. He carefully examined the Societies, but appears to have had some subsequent misgivings as to the thoroughness and fidelity with which this had been done. Some time before Miss Bishop, a lady correspondent of the evangelist, had opened a School at Keynsham, and the following letter to her indicates the authority which he still wielded over his Societies and also his views on education.

NEAR LEEDS, July 17th, 1781.

MY DEAR. SISTER,

If I live to meet the Society in Bristol, again, I shall kill or cure the fault of those unwise and unkind parents, who make their children finer than themselves. I shall make their ears tingle. As to you, I advise you to be a Bible Christian yourself inwardly and outwardly. Be not a hair's breadth more conformable to the fashion of the world than you were when I saw you last. Then, train up your children in the self-same way. Say to them, with all mildness and firmness. ‘Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ.’ Whoever is pleased or displeased, keep to this—to *Christian, primitive simplicity*. Perhaps you will at first lose some scholars thereby; but regard it not: God will provide you more. And be assured, nothing shall be wanting that is in the power of,

“My dear sister, your affectionate friend and brother,

“JOHN WESLEY.”†

* Appendix I.

† Methodist Magazine, 1807, page 471.

In the spring of 1781, John Fletcher, having been greatly restored by his residence on the continent, spent some time again at Brislington with Mr. Ireland, his former host. Of the unabated fervency of his spirit we have proof in the testimony of Mr. Rankin, one of the Bristol ministers.—

“In the year 1781, being stationed in Bristol with my much-esteemed friend, Mr. Pawson, I was informed of Mr. Fletcher's arrival at Brislington, from his journey to Switzerland. I rode over to Mr. Ireland's the day after, and had such an interview with him as I shall never forget in time or eternity. As I had not seen him for upwards of ten years, his looks, his salutation, and his address, struck me with a mixture of wonder, solemnity, and joy. We retired into Mr. Ireland's garden, where we could converse with more freedom. He then began to inquire concerning the work of God in America, and my labours for the five years I had spent on that Continent. I gave him as far as I was capable, a full account of every thing that he wished to know. While I was giving him this relation, he stopped me six times, and, when under the shade of the trees, poured out his soul to God, for the prosperity of the work and our brethren there. He appeared to be as deeply interested in behalf of our suffering friends as if they had been his own flock at Madeley. He several times called upon me also, to commend them to God in prayer. This was an hour never to be forgotten by me while memory remains. Before we parted, I engaged him to come to Bristol on the Monday following, in order to meet the select band in the forenoon, and to preach in my place in the evening. He did so accordingly. During the hour that he spent with the select band, the room appeared as ‘the house of God and the gate of heaven.’ He preached in the evening, from the 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians, chap. ii. verse 13. The

whole congregation was dissolved in tears. He spoke like one who had but just left the converse of God and angels, and not like a human being. The different conversations I had with him, his prayers and preaching during the few days which he stayed at Bristol and Brislington, left such an impression on my mind, and were attended with such salutary effects, that for some months afterwards, not a cloud intervened between God and my soul, no, not for one hour. His memory will ever be precious to me while life shall remain, and the union of spirit which I felt with that holy and blessed man, will have its consummation in those regions of light, love, and glory, where parting shall be no more."*

CHAPTER XIV.

"THE TONGUE OF THE LEARNED."

Horse Cured by Prayer—Letter on Courtship—Adam Clarke : his Conversion, Call, Kingswood Experiences, and Grand Career—Stanton-Drew Druidical Remains—"The Dairyman's Daughter"—Wesley Sick—His visit to Holland.

THE September of 1781 saw Wesley according to his wont in Bristol and its contiguous towns. On his way thereto from Taunton, "one of the chaise horses was on a sudden so lame that he could hardly set his feet to the ground." It being impossible to procure any human help, prayer was resorted to, and "immediately the lameness was gone and he went on just as he did before." On Sunday the 9th, in the "calm sunshiny evening," he preached in King's Square, the great congregation "praising God with one heart and one voice." During the following days he discoursed at Keynsham, at Chew-magna, at Trowbridge, at Thornbury, at Shepton Mallet, at Bradford, at Pensford, "a dull, dreary place, the flower of the congregation being gone;" and in the main-street of Mangotsfield, "a place famous for all manner of wickedness, to almost all the inhabitants of the town."

Hearing, probably from the troubled parents of the would-be-bridegroom, that Mr. Elisha Bush, a young schoolmaster

at Midsomer Norton, was wishful to marry one to whom his father and mother raised grave objections : he sent him the following assertion of filial duty *versus* amatory desire.

"COLEFORD, September, 11, 1781.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"I was much concerned yesterday, when I heard you were likely to marry a woman against the consent of your parents. I have never, in an observation of fifty years, known such a marriage attended with a blessing. I know not how it should be, since it is flatly contrary to the fifth commandment. I told my own mother, when pressing me to marry, "I dare not allow you a positive voice herein ; I dare not marry a person because you bid me. But I must allow you a negative voice : I will marry no person if you forbid. I know it would be a sin against God : Take care what you do. Mr. S. is not a proper judge : he hopes to separate you from the Methodists ; and I expect, if you take this step, that will be the end.

"I am, your affectionate brother,

"JOHN WESLEY." *

During his stay he met the classes and was not a little surprised to find the society still declining. He also visited Miss Bishop's school, at Keynsham, and Mr. Henderson's Asylum at Hanham—"the most successful institution for lunatics in the three kingdoms."

On Thursday, Oct. 4th, by special request he preached "the condemned sermon" in the city gaol ; and took leave of the Bristol congregations on the following Sunday by again preaching in King-Square.

Twelve months passed away—months of untiring activity and adventure, and every day saw on the part of the still youthful octogenarian, something attempted, something done for God. In March he spent a few days in Bristol, but nothing occurred to call our attention. From Bristol, taking many

* Methodist Magazine, 1848, p. 1055.

midland and northern places on his way, he travelled as far as Aberdeen, from thence returning through London to the Land's End. At Camelford he was informed that an old acquaintance and brother clergyman, Mr. Thompson, rector of St. Gennis, was on the point of death, so borrowing the fleetest horse he could procure, he rode as fast as possible and soon stood beside his dying friend. Having administered to him the last consolations of religion, he returned through Tiverton, Taunton, and South Brent to Bristol—where one was awaiting him, a young man from the Emerald Isle, whose name then unknown and unhonoured, now shines brilliantly on the bright beadroll of literary fame as Dr. Adam Clarke.

Adam Clarke was born in 1760 or 1762—still an undecided point. His father was poor but educated, and kept a school in the parish of Agherton, Coleraine. Adam, when a child was somewhat dull, but one day goaded by the taunts of his teacher and fellow students, his intellect, like a slumbering giant awoke, and ere long asserted its mastery over all competitors. When about sixteen years of age he was brought under deep conviction by the faithful preaching of John Brittle and Thomas Barber, and after struggling “like some strong swimmer in his agony” through floods of penitential grief, he firmly fixed his feet upon the rock and sung salvation's song. Soon after he commenced to exhort, meanwhile pursuing his studies in philosophy, mathematics, and languages with unflagging zest. John Bredin, a preacher on the Londonderry circuit, perceiving the talents of the young Coleraine convert, sent to Wesley respecting him, who wrote to him to come over to Kingswood School. Commended to God by the supplication of the little society of his native place he set out forthwith with a scanty wardrobe, and a still scantier purse, but with a heart rich in the unabated glow of

youthful consecration, and an intellect replete with princely promise. In the passage to Liverpool, the packet was boarded by a pressgang, but the lieutenant mistaking Adam for a priest, providentially passed him by. Arriving safely at Liverpool, he took a place for Bristol on the outside of a lumbering slow-going conveyance, by a strange misnomer called "The Fly." After some days jolting over wretched roads, on the last day of which he subsisted on a penny loaf and a halfpenny worth of apples, he reached Bristol, hungry and exhausted, with nineteen-pence-halfpenny only in his pocket. Entering an inn in Broadmead, he warmed himself by the kitchen fire, and called for bread and cheese and a drink of water. With some demur on the part of the waiter to bring water instead of beer, his modest wants were met. For his supper he paid sixpence, another sixpence for his bed, and to the chambermaid for taking care of his box, a third; thus reducing his fortune to three-halfpence. With these resources only at his command, breakfast in the Broadmead inn was an impossibility, so rising early, young Adam bent his steps towards Kingswood, arriving there about seven o'clock, the hour for public service. Oppressed in spirit, a consoling sermon by Mr. Payne, the junior preacher of the Bristol circuit, from "Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" somewhat heartened him, and after service he sought an interview with Mr. Simpson, the head-master of the school, to whom he delivered Wesley's letter. His reception was most cold and uncereemonious. Simpson roughly told him that he had no room for any one in the school, and that, as Wesley would not be in the neighbourhood for a fortnight, he had better go back to Bristol and do the best he could. Adam pleaded his impecuniosity so earnestly that at length permission was given him to remain and occupy an old room at the end of the chapel.

There the forlorn youth passed several days and nights, his only food being a scanty supply of bread and milk. Permitted at length to take a place at the family table, his position was made even more intolerable by the overbearing imperiousness of Simpson's wife. To unkindness she added insult, for asserting that the young Irishman was troubled with the itch, she made him rub himself from head to foot with Jackson's ointment, "an infernal unguent," as the victim called it, "which made him smell worse than a pole-cat." Thus exposed to annoyance and ill-usage, Adam Clarke found comfort in his books; filling up the intervals of study by gardening and occasional essays to do good. Digging one day in the garden, he hit upon half a guinea, and as no one could be found who claimed it, he invested it in a Hebrew grammar, from which he learned his first lessons in the holy tongue. Mr. Rankin, the superintendent preacher of the Bristol circuit, also visited him and gave him some circuit work. In after years when his name had become distinguished, he sometimes told how his saddened heart was solaced when after preaching at Pensford, a venerable man of the congregation laid his hand upon his head, and said thrice over, in tones of approval and of prayer,—“Christ bless the word.”

At length Wesley arrived from Cornwall, and being apprised of Adam's presence, at once expressed a wish to see him. The interview is described by Adam Clarke himself,—“I had this privilege for the first time on September the 6th. I went into Bristol; saw Mr. Rankin, who took me to Mr. Wesley's study, off the the great lobby of the rooms over the chapel in Broadmead. He tapped at the door, which was opened by this truly apostolic man. Mr. Rankin retired. Mr. Wesley took me kindly by the hand, and asked me how long since I had left Ireland. Our conversation was short. He said, ‘Well,

brother Clarke, do you wish to devote yourself entirely to the work of God?’ I answered, ‘Sir, I wish to do, and be, what God pleases.’ He then said, ‘We want a preacher for Bradford, in Wiltshire: hold yourself in readiness to go there. I am going into the country, and will let you know when you shall go.’ He then turned to me, laid his hands upon my head, and spent a few moments in praying to God to bless and preserve me, and to give me success in the work to which I was called. I departed, having now received, in addition to my appointment from God to preach His Gospel, the only authority I could have from man, in that line in which I was to exercise the ministry of the divine word.”

A few days later, Adam Clarke received final instructions to repair to his appointed circuit. Gladly, without delaying a single hour, he left Kingswood, and trudged his way to Trowbridge, the head quarters of the Bradford Circuit. We need not trace his grand career—suffice to say, that he became one of the greatest linguists of the world; that he thrice filled the presidential chair; that his company was courted by princes and the literati of the land; and that, withal, he continued a lowly-minded, faithful Methodist preacher to the end. He died of Asiatic cholera, on Tuesday the 25th of August, 1832, leaving in his Commentary an imperishable monument of his diligence and erudition. The final entry in the journal of his last visit to Ireland, written about seven weeks before his death, revealed the beautiful childlike spirit which marked his declining years:—“I feel a simple heart, the prayers of my childhood are yet precious to me; and the simple hymns which I sang when a child, I sing now with unction and delight. May I live to Thee, die in Thee, and be with Thee to all eternity.—Amen. *Adam Clarke.*”

Wesley's stay in the neighbourhood of Bristol on the

occasion of his introduction to Adam Clarke, was continued for several weeks. He discoursed, according to his custom, in the Broadmead Chapel; in King's Square; and in the afternoon of Sunday, October 6th, in Temple Church, where he discovered that in order to be heard, it was essential for the preacher to direct his "voice to the middle of the pillar fronting the pulpit." At Kingswood he preached "a funeral sermon on Jenny Hall, a lovely young woman, who died in full triumph." At Stanton Drew he stopped to soliloquise on the Druids' temple, and the now unknown dynamics which so placed the ponderous stones. The Bristol society he found still decreasing; nevertheless, on Monday, October 11th, he "left it with much satisfaction, firmly believing that God would revive his work."

From Bristol, Wesley proceeded through Devizes, Salisbury, Winchester and Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight. At Newport there sat among the congregation a young man named Robert Wallbridge, and probably by his side his sister Elizabeth,—a fair-haired, merry-hearted girl of just twelve summers old. Robert Wallbridge was converted under Wesley's preaching, and his sister some time after by the instrumentality of James Crabb. Elizabeth Wallbridge was none other than "The Dairyman's Daughter," the beautiful story of whose life and death is now read in not less than thirty languages. She lived and died a Methodist,—a fact which Legh Richmond, her biographer, most strangely overlooked.

Six months of increasing labour brought the evangelist again to the banks of the Avon. At Bristol he found the Society "a family of love, so united as it had not been for many years." Suffering when he arrived from cold, a fever supervened, with severe rheumatic pains. His illness was

serious, and the remedies resorted to so violent as to rob him of all his strength. Wesley thought that his pilgrimage was nearly over, and this impression was deepened by a lugubrious “Sister” of the Bristol Society, who assured him that on two occasions lately in her dreams she had seen his coffin borne to the grave, followed by Dr. Coke, John Fletcher, and the itinerants walking two and two. Wesley usually attached great importance to the visions of the night; but the conviction of his end being near so far from paralysing his activities only inspired him with an ill-timed earnestness which had nearly made the “Sister’s” dream an accomplished reality. Only partially restored, he hastened to Stroud, where a relapse occurred which brought him near to death. Tidings of his sickness flew far and wide. Several of the preachers met to plead for a prolongation of his life, and did not plead in vain. Rapidly recovering, Wesley rode on to Birmingham, where, by being well electrified several times in the day, all symptoms of his sickness speedily disappeared.

In the summer of 1783 Wesley, “partly for relaxation, and partly to indulge and enlarge his catholic spirit, by forming an acquaintance with the truly pious in foreign nations,” spent seventeen days in Holland. His fame had so preceded him, that in each town he visited, he was welcomed with every mark of honour and esteem. Enjoying much the interesting sights afforded him, and the social intercourse with the great and good, he felt, he tells us, “as much at home at Utrecht and Amsterdam, as he felt in Bristol and London.” He returned to England in the beginning of July, and having spent a few days in the metropolis, set out for the Bristol Conference, resting at Bath for three days on the way, during which he heartily entered into the enjoyment of a pleasant picnic to Blaize Castle and Lord Clifford’s woods at Kings-

weston. The frosts of four score years were now resting on his venerable head, but no advance of time could cloud the sunshine of his heart—a sunshine which lit up with ever brightening beauty all that his Father's hands had made.

CHAPTER X.V.

“BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD.”

Conference of 1783—Kingswood Scholars—Seven Sermons on one Sunday—Dr. Coke ordained Bishop—Conference of 1786—John Fletcher’s Death—William Bramwell’s Life and Death.

THE fortieth Conference began in Bristol July 29, 1783. The Bristol circuit numbers were returned as 1481, being a net increase of only half a hundred in three years’ interval from the preceding Bristol Conference ; the Connexional numbers as 45,995 being an increase of only 175 members on the year.

Kingswood School affairs occupied the attention of the Conference a considerable time. The exuberance of youth it appears had often rebelled against the unwholesome restriction placed upon it, for complaints were made that, defiant of punishment, the boys were wont to run into the woods to play or fight with the colliers’ children. “It must be mended or ended,” said Wesley ; but it never was ended effectually until the unnatural rules which governed it gave place to wiser ones.

Chapels were multiplying too fast,—the zeal of the people having outstripped their discretion and their means, and this fact called for a long discussion, and led to resolutions to the

effect that no preaching houses should be built during the year, except such as were already begun ; that none should be permitted to beg for any house except in the circuit in which it stands ; and that all the preaching houses should be forthwith settled on the Conference plan. For the accomplishment of the last mentioned object Dr. Coke was commissioned to visit the Societies throughout England, the Assistants being urged to help him to the utmost of their power.

During the Conference services were daily held in the several preaching places and in the open air. On the Conference Sunday Adam Clarke listened to no less than seven sermons, and appears to have enjoyed them all. In the early morning he heard Alexander Mather preach in the Conference Chapel a "very useful sermon from Isaiah xxx. 3, 4." From thence hastening to Guinea Street, he listened to Samuel Bradburn as he eloquently discoursed on "Christian perfection," from I. John iv. 19. Leaving there he posted to the Drawbridge, where Joseph Taylor preached "an excellent and affecting sermon from 'As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'" Thus, having heard and mentally digested three sermons, young Adam Clark was prepared for the matutinal meal. Breakfast over, he again bent his steps to the Broadmead Chapel, where at ten o'clock Wesley descanted on the "Baptism of the Holy Ghost," and administered the sacrament to a vast concourse of people. After dinner he wended his way to Temple Church, and heard the Rev. B. Collins, the clergyman ; from thence to Caroline Street, where Wesley preached from Hebrews vi. 1 ; after which he met the Society at the Chapel, and gave them extracts from the journal of his recent tour in Holland. Homiletically insatiable, Adam finished the day at Kingsdown,

where Thomas Hanby enforced the momentous question, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

During the sittings of the Conference Wesley was again seized with an alarming illness. To alleviate his sufferings a grain and a half of opium was administered, which had the effect of producing complete and dangerous comatose. Recovering possession of his faculties, he expressed to Joseph Bradford, his friend and faithful nurse, his happiness and only hope,—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

Death, however, was once more disappointed, for, removed to the hospitable home of Mr. Castlemain, and attended by Dr. Drummond, the patient rapidly recovered, and ere long was at his much-loved work again, preaching, and by personal solicitation, providing for the pressing necessities of the stricken and destitute.

The interval between the Bristol Conferences of 1783 and 1786—a period which gave to the Connexion, in the form of the "Deed of Declaration," its Magna Charta, the legal Conference, with all its privileges and powers—Wesley spent in his accustomed rounds of holy enterprise. Methodical in all his movements, he had an appointed time for the visitation of every important place, the privilege falling to Bristol usually about March and Michaelmas. Without attempting to follow him closely, step by step, we will note the most interesting incidents which marked his several visits.

In September, 1784, Wesley was accompanied to Bristol by Dr. Coke, and Messrs. Vasey and Whatcoat. Thither they had gone to embark for America. Six months before, a conversation of a most momentous nature had taken place

between Wesley and the Doctor, his earnest helper. The conversation was on the scriptural nature of Ministerial Orders, and the spiritual needs of the newly-formed American Republic. Expressing his conviction that episcopacy was the most suitable form of Church government for the Churches of the West, and affirming that scripturally a presbyter is co-ordinate with a bishop, pleading also as precedent the custom pursued by the presbyters of the ancient church of Alexandria in ordaining from time to time their bishops, he finally wished Dr. Coke to accept episcopal ordination at his hands, and in that character to repair to America, and take the superintendence of the Societies of the United States. Hesitating at first, Dr. Coke at length consented. At the Leeds Conference the matter was discussed and fully concurred in by Mr. Fletcher; and on the second day of September, 1784, in the Broadmead preaching room, Wesley, assisted by Mr. Creighton, a clergyman employed in reading prayers at City Road, ordained Dr. Coke a bishop, and Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey presbyters to accompany him and assist him in his work. Three weeks after, followed by the prayers and benedictions of multitudes, the good Doctor and his companions set sail,—Argonauts seeking not the golden fleece, but the diffusion of godliness: “Pilgrim Fathers” scarcely less noble than the “Mayflower” men, who erst on “the wild New England shore,” sought “a faith’s pure shrine—freedom to worship God.”

On Sunday, September 12, 1784, Wesley preached at Kingswood, under the shade of a double row of trees which he himself had planted forty years before,—a few days after the use of the Church at Chew Magna was proffered him, but on his going to preach refused. On October 2, he conducted a covenant service in the Broadmead room, at which

there were a thousand communicants. Twelve months later he found to his amazement, considering the able and diligent preachers appointed to the Bristol circuit, the Society in *statu quo*; and at Pensford he feared “after all the pains taken the people knew just as much of religion as the Hottentots.” In March, 1786, he was there again, during which visit he preached in Temple Church, and in the Broadmead room baptized a young negro, who appeared to be deeply serious and much affected. Samuel Bradburn, the superintendent of the circuit having lost his wife some little time before, Wesley took him with him on his journeyings, believing that the change would calm his mind and mitigate his grief.

The forty-third annual Conference began in Bristol, Tuesday, July 25th, 1786. The daily sittings commenced at six in the morning, and continued with intervals for breakfast and dinner, until the evening. About eighty preachers were present. Tuesday and Wednesday were occupied in canvassing the preachers’ characters and qualifications. On Thursday afternoon an open session was held, when the relation of Methodism to the Established Church was discussed; and it was resolved not to denominationally divide therefrom. With this resolution, however, concessions were made to the societies which indicate that Wesley foresaw the inevitable separation which ensued immediately after his decease. Permission for the first time was given to hold services in Methodist chapels during church hours, in places where the clergy were notoriously bad, or preached Arian, or other equally pernicious doctrines; or where Church accommodation was insufficient; or, lastly, where there was no church within two or three miles. He urged upon the preachers the importance of resuscitating the early morning services, bands, and select societies, and of changing their stewards from time to time.

Always jealous with a godly jealousy for the proprieties of public worship, he also enjoined upon them "always to conclude the service in about an hour;" to "never scream;" to "never lean upon or beat the Bible;" and to "never preach a funeral sermon but for an eminently holy person." The singing of the sanctuary was also discussed, and the preachers requested to "introduce no new tunes;" to "see that none sing too slow, and the women sing their parts;" and to "exhort all to sing, and all to stand at singing, as well as to kneel at prayers."

The number of connexional members was returned as 79,506, an increase of nearly nine thousand on the year; the Bristol circuit membership as 1,600, an increase on the year of about seventy, and on the three years interval between the Conferences, of about one hundred and twenty.

At this Conference, to the question "Who has died this year?" the solemn reply was given "John Fletcher, a pattern of all holiness, scarcely to be paralleled in a century." "Many exemplary men," says Wesley in his works, "have I known, holy in heart and life, within fourscore years, but one equal to him I have not known; one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God, so unblamable a character in every respect, I have not found either in Europe or America, nor do I expect to find another such on this side of eternity." The beautiful instances of his piety, given in the previous pages, may be taken as an illustration of the whole of his christian life. His departure was not merely peaceful, but gloriously triumphant. The pallor of death already resting on his countenance, he preached for the last time in Madeley Church with a power and pathos which awakened an awful concern throughout the whole assembly. Descending from the pulpit into the chancel he said "I throw myself under the wings of the cherubim

before the mercy seat.” Struggling through a most solemn sacramental service—during which, amid the sobbings of the congregation, he several times sank exhausted on the communion table—he at length pronounced the benediction; and then, blessings still flowing from his trembling lips, he was borne to the bed of death. Suffering much his gladness was ecstatic—“Shout, shout aloud!” he cried, “I want a gust of praise to go to the ends of the earth.” Utterance failed him at the last, but in answer to his faithful wife, he raised his dying hands to indicate that Christ was precious, and the prospect of glory bright. Then—his face radiant with a glory which never shone on earth or sea—gently as a wearied infant on its mother’s arm, he fell asleep in Jesus, August 14th, 1785, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

“God buries his workmen, but he carries on his work.” This oft used adage was never more amply illustrated than at the Conference of 1786. Elijah had ascended, but already his mantle was resting on Elisha. Fletcher’s name appears in the obituary,—William Bramwell’s among the names of nearly forty young preachers received on trial.

William Bramwell was born in 1759, at Elswick in Lancashire. His education was very limited, and he was early apprenticed to a Preston currier. Trained to religious habits from infancy, and longing for salvation, he sought it in penitential solitude of the anchorite, and the most rigorous self-imposed austerities. Thus troubled, he obtained clearer views on the nature of saving faith, while receiving the sacrament in Preston Church; and soon after, while listening to Wesley’s preaching, he realized the sense of sins forgiven. Thus converted, he was soon intensely active in christian work. He commenced prayer meetings as early as five in the morning for working men; he established a class, and by

these and other holy works, he created an interest which considerably augmented the Society. Thus actively employed, he also sought anxiously for himself the grace of sanctity. The blessing tarried, for at first he sought it not aright, but at last it was bestowed. "The Lord," he says, for whom I had waited, came suddenly to the temple of my heart, and I had an immediate evidence that this was the blessing I had for some time been seeking. My soul was all wonder, love, and praise." Called by Wesley into the itinerancy, he laboured for nearly thirty years with wonderful success. "His appearance was striking, his features large, strong, and dark like those of a bronze statue, and his eye piercing as an eagle's." His intellect was astute, his discernment of character extraordinary, "his voice singularly musical, and his command over the passions of his hearers absolute." By diligence and early rising he acquired a knowledge of the New Testament in its original tongue, and became so conversant with French as to translate therefrom a work on homiletics. His great power, however, was in his prayers—prayers more fragrant than ancient incense, uplifted from a holy, loving heart. Bramwell like Barnabas "was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith:" hence by his ministry, multitudes were added unto the Lord.

His end was sudden but glorious. He attended the Conference of 1818 held in the town of Leeds. He preached his last sermon at Holbeck from Isaiah xiii, 1-3, expatiating with marvellous unction and power on the Redeemer's promise to be near his people in the hour of death. On the eve of his decease, he had a religious conversation with his host, and his soul seemed deeply moved. Desiring to be called at two o'clock—for the slow journeying of those early times necessitated his departure for his circuit before the dawning of the day—he

retired to rest. Through the hours his host heard his voice in earnest supplication, “Lord bless me, Lord prepare me for Thy kingdom and take me to Thyself.” At two o’clock he arose, but his heart seemed too full of heaven to heed the early meal—which the servant had prepared. He already feasted on angels’ food—his mouth was filled with praise and prayer. Kneeling, he poured out his soul for the domestic present with him, and for all the family. “The Lord bless you,” he said to her, and then went forth into the night. Two of the public watchmen saw him reel and fall, but ere they reached him “he was not, for God had taken him.” Soon the grey light of the morning fell upon the great West Riding town, but William Bramwell walked the streets of the Holy City which “hath no need of the sun, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

CHAPTER XVI.

"STORMY WIND FULFILLING HIS WORD."

Wesley's second visit to Holland—His visit to Ireland—A useful present—Sir Robert Peel—The Channel Islands—Remarkable voyage—Methodism in Inverness—Interesting Letter—Anti-slavery Society—Exorcism in Temple Church—Wesley preaches before the Bristol Mayor and Corporation.

IMMEDIATELY after the Conference, Wesley paid a second visit to Holland, and on his return spent some days in Bristol. In a friend's house he sought retirement in order to write without interruption John Fletcher's life, but he could not resist the desire of his friends that he should again preach in Temple Church. This he did on Wednesday, September 13th, and on Sunday the 24th, to overflowing congregations.

Once more near King Square, he declared to "a huge multitude the whole counsel of God," and in Guinea Street Chapel, from Heb. xii. 1., he described what he believed to be the chief besetting sins of Bristol—"love of money and love of ease." On meeting the classes he found the Kingswood Society stationary, but the Bristol considerably increased—he hoped "in grace as well as in numbers."

In March he was in Bristol again. Mrs. Fletcher was in the neighbourhood at the time, and, invited by Wesley, she met as many of the classes as her failing strength would permit—“her words like fire conveying both light and heat to the hearts of all who heard her.” The Bristol Methodists had already degenerated in respect of early rising—from five to a dozen only attending the five o’clock preaching services. Wesley strongly warned them of their indolence, and so effectually, that from two to three hundred attended every morning during his stay.

On the whole, however, Bristol Methodism was looking up. The numbers continued to increase. During Wesley’s visit there were vouchsafed gracious revival influences, and he left “with much satisfaction, expecting to hear of a plentiful harvest,” in reward for the labourer’s toil

From Bristol Wesley proceeded through the midland and eastern counties, and then *via* Holyhead to Dublin Bay. He spent nearly three months in Ireland, preaching from town to town, warmly welcomed in every place. At the close of a service in a country town, a methodist cobbler pressed him to accept a present which he said might possibly prove useful. On opening the parcel he found an awl and a strong waxed thread. He was somewhat amused at the singularity of the gift, but soon proved its utility. The harness broke, and but for the awl and thread the evangelist would have been left in a houseless neighbourhood, with no means at hand of reaching his next appointment.

Having held the Irish Conference, Wesley returned to England. In July, he conducted the Manchester Conference, during the sittings of which he breakfasted one morning with thirty-six of his itinerants, at the house of “Mr. Peel, a calico printer”—afterwards the famous statesman baronet. In

August he went accompanied by Dr. Coke and Joseph Bradford to the Channel Islands. Obligated to be in Bristol on an appointed day, he left Guernsey for Penzance, the wind only serving for that point. Adam Clarke, then labouring in the Islands, received permission to return with Wesley and his friends, and to him we are indebted for a graphic description of Wesley's power in prayer.

“ Mr. Wesley was sitting reading in the cabin, and hearing the noise and bustle occasioned by putting the vessel about to stand on her different tacks, he put his head above, and inquired what was the matter? Being told the wind was become contrary, and the ship was obliged thus to tack, he said, ‘ Then let us go to prayer.’ His own company who were upon deck walked down, and at his request Dr. Coke, Mr. Bradford, and Mr. Clarke went to prayer. After the latter had ended, Mr. Wesley broke out into fervent supplication, which seemed to be more the offspring of strong faith than of mere desire, in words remarkable as well as the spirit, feeling, and manner in which they were uttered. Some of them were to the following effect :—‘ Almighty and everlasting God, Thou hast Thy way everywhere, and all things serve the purposes of Thy will : Thou holdest the winds in Thy fists, and sittest upon the waterfloods, and reignest King for ever, Command these winds and these waves that they obey THEE, and take us speedily and safely to the haven wither we would be.’ The power of his petition was felt by all. He rose from his knees, made no kind of remark, but took up his book, and continued his reading. Mr. Clark went upon deck, and what was his surprise when he found the vessel standing on her right course with a steady breeze, which slackened not, till, carrying them at the rate of nine or ten knots an hour, they anchored safely near St. Michael's Mount in Penzance Bay ! On the sudden

and favourable change of the wind Mr. Wesley made no remark: so fully did he expect to be heard, that he took it for granted he was heard. Such answers to prayer he was in the habit of receiving, and therefore to him the occurrence was not strange. Of such a circumstance how many of those who did not enter into his views would have descanted at large, had it happened in favour of themselves! yet all the notice he takes of this singular circumstance is contained in the following entry in his Journal:—‘In the morning, Thursday, (September 6th, 1787,) we went on board with a fair moderate wind. But we had just entered the ship when the wind died away. We cried to God for help; and it presently sprung up exactly fair, and did not cease till it brought us into Penzance Bay.’” *

Safely arrived at Bristol, Wesley devoted three weeks to his usual pastoral and preaching work. In addition he answered “abundance of letters” which had accumulated in his hands. One of his letters we will insert.

Jonathan Crowther and Duncan McAllum had been appointed to Inverness to succeed Edward Burbeck and Joshua Keighley. On arriving, they found the latter dead, and the former dying of fever in a filthy bed. Their work was heavy, their wanderings from place to place in their extensive circuit, full of difficulty and dangerous adventure, but as to payment—well of that they had little or next to nothing. For one year’s service Crowther received just fifty shillings; forty of which he spent in removing to Dunbar. Borne down by toil and trouble, he wrote to Wesley to the effect that no man was fit for the Inverness circuit unless he had flesh of brass, bones of iron, and a heart harder than a stoic’s. He believed that in

* Etheridge’s Life of Dr. Adam Clarke.

the "miserable corner" in which his lot was cast, he should be sacrificed, and even that he could endure—yea a sevenfold martyrdom—if he could but accomplish good; but to live in misery and die in banishment, with no fruit to crown his labour and enwreath the pillar of his martyr-fame, was more than he could bear. Wesley sent him the following characteristic reply:—

NEAR BATH,

September 25th, 1787.

DEAR JONATHAN,

The sum of the matter is, you want money; and money you shall have, if I can beg, borrow, or anything but steal. I say, therefore, "Dwell in the land and be doing good, and verily thou shalt be fed." I should be sorry for the death of Mr. Burbeck, but that I know God does all things well; and if his work prospers in your hands, this will make your labours light.

Our preachers now find in the North of Scotland, what they formerly found all over England, yet they went on; and when I had only blackberries to eat in Cornwall, still God gave me sufficient strength for my work.

I am, etc.,

P.S.—To Mr. Atley,

JOHN WESLEY.

Pay to Jonathan Crowther, or his order, Five Guineas,

JOHN WESLEY.

In the month of May, 1777, an Anti-Slavery Society was formed in London—the Society now imperishably associated with the honoured names of Granville, Sharpe, Thomas Clarkson, and William Wilberforce, and with the grand Emancipation Act of 1834.

It is strangely and sadly illustrative of the fact that the best of men may be blinded by prevailing sentiment that Whitefield encouraged slavery in Georgia, and held slaves as property on his Orphan-house estate. Wesley never shared his views. As early as 1774, he published his "Thoughts

upon Slavery," and on the formation of the London Anti-Slavery Society, he gave it his powerful patronage, and by his preaching and his pen sought to extend its influence. Bristol in early times obtained an unenviable notoriety as a slave emporium, but influenced by the preaching of Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester, many of the traffickers in human flesh abandoned their wicked trade, and thus set an example to the slave dealers of other towns. Centuries later, in the spirit of the ancient prelate, and in the same city, Wesley denounced slavery as the sum of all human villanies. Having previously announced his intention of preaching on the subject, the "Broadmead House on Monday, March 3rd, 1788, was filled from end to end with high and low, rich and poor." "I preached," he says in his journal, "on that ancient prophecy, 'God shall enlarge Japheth. And he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.' About the middle of the discourse, while there was on every side attention still as night, a vehement noise arose, none could tell why, and shot like lightning through the whole congregation. The terror and confusion were inexpressible. You might have imagined it was a city taken by storm. The people rushed upon each other with the utmost violence; the benches were broke in pieces; and nine-tenths of the congregation appeared to be struck with the same panic. In about six minutes the storm ceased almost as suddenly as it rose; and, all being calm, I went on without the least interruption. It was the strangest incident of the kind I ever remember; and I believe none can account for it, without supposing some preternatural influence. Satan fought, lest his kingdom should be delivered up. We

the "miserable corner" in which his lot was cast, he should be sacrificed, and even that he could endure—yea a sevenfold martyrdom—if he could but accomplish good; but to live in misery and die in banishment, with no fruit to crown his labour and enwreath the pillar of his martyr-fame, was more than he could bear. Wesley sent him the following characteristic reply:—

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set Friday apart as a day of fasting and prayer, that God would remember those poor outcasts of men; and (what seems impossible with men, considering the wealth and power of their oppressors) make a way for them to escape, and break their chains in sunder."

On Saturday, March 15th, having no other time at his disposal, Wesley preached in Temple Church. The vestry of that sanctuary had just been the scene of a remarkable case of supposed exorcism. The victim of indwelling demons, as some supposed, but a ventriloquistic impostor, in the opinion of others, was George Lukins, of Yatton, in Somersetshire; the exorcists were the Rev. Mr. Easterbrook the vicar, Messrs. Valton, Broadbeat, Rhodes, and Brettle (the Bristol circuit ministers), and several other persons. The affair caused great contention in the city, opinion being strongly divided as to its genuineness. Wesley says of it, "I preached in Temple Church. I had no thought of meddling with the controversy which has lately pestered this city, till I read those words in the second lesson, which threw me full upon it, 'Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.' I then thought it my duty to speak clearly and strongly upon that head." In this entry no clue is given to his own opinions of the matter; but, knowing his strong belief in supernatural visitations, we may safely assume that he believed that Lukins was a dispossessed demoniac, and no mere impostor making a market of short-sighted credulity.

The many services which Wesley had rendered to the city was recognised at last, for on this occasion he preached in the Mayor's Chapel of St. Mark. The Mayor, "most of the Aldermen, and a multitude of high and low were there;" but undeterred, the preacher "explained and applied that awful

passage of Scripture,—the history of Dives and Lazarus.”
Having described Dives richly apparelled and sumptuously fed,
he dined with the Mayor at the Mansion-house.

CHAPTER XVII.

“ THE SWEET SINGER OF ISRAEL.”

Charles Wesley's Death—His Character—His Poetic Genius—John Wesley on the wing.

ON Saturday, March 29th, 1788, a fortnight after his sermon before the Mayor and Corporation, Wesley conducted a service in Salop. Sweetly the congregation sang :—

One army of the living God,
To His command we bow ;
Part of His host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.

Just at that solemn moment, as was afterwards ascertained, the “sweet singer of Israel,” the incomparable poet who penned the hymn, passed over Jordan and entered the promised land. For years Charles Wesley had been ailing, and at length the message came and found him quite prepared. During his last protracted sickness — sickness borne with uncomplaining patience, he called his faithful partner to his side and bidding her write, he dictated his last poetic utterance :—

“ In age and feebleness extreme,
Who shall a sinful worm redeem ?
Jesus, my only hope Thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart ;
O could I catch a smile from Thee,
And drop into eternity !”

Glimpses of Charles Wesley's character and conduct have been afforded from time to time within these pages, and it only remains to take a brief and general view. In stature he was short; in manners somewhat abrupt; in habits desultory; in temperament, like nearly all other poetic geniuses, inclined to melancholy—a melancholy, however, often attended with bursts of holy joy, like sunshine through the rifts of April clouds. As a preacher he was more eloquent than John, but came immeasurably behind him in constructive and governing power—indeed, had Wesley died early in his career and the leadership of Methodism devolved on Charles, it would probably have passed away before the century which saw its rise, or have been as little recognized to day as the Moravian Societies from which, in a sense, it sprang. As a churchman Charles was conservative, and his devotion to "Church and State" intensified as the years of his life advanced. He mourned, as we have seen, over the disloyalty which dared to forecast the possibility of denominational disunion from the Church; he opposed to the utmost all the great measures of Methodism which, initiated by his brother, have contributed to its power and permanence; and true to his principles to the last, he declined to be interred in the burial ground of City Road—desiring to be buried in the Church Yard of St. Mary-le-bone—that being consecrated earth. This mortuary arrangement was to John a source of painful disappointment. "It is a pity," he says in a letter to a friend, "but the remains of my brother had been deposited with mine. Certainly that ground is holy as any in England; and it contains a large quantity of bonnie dust." Seven weeks later he published an article in the Magazine, in which he denounced the custom of consecrating burial grounds as a mere relic of Romish superstition.*

* See Methodist Magazine, 1788, p. 543.

Charles Wesley's praise will live for ever as the greatest hymnist of the Christian Church. In the days of the good king Hezekiah when, after long profanation of the altar, "the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also;" so in the days of Wesley when, after long indifference and death, thousands laid themselves upon the altar of holy consecration, the land at once was filled with sweetest melody. John was the Moses of Methodism; Charles, so to speak, the Miriam who went before the people with music and saintly song: his lyre was variously attuned,—sometimes to loudest triumph, sometimes to tones of woe,—but it never hung unstrung and voiceless upon the willows. His published poems amount to about four thousand six hundred; his manuscripts would supply about two thousand more,—making nearly seven thousand psalms and hymns and spiritual songs consecrated to the services of religion during his busy, anxious life.* His hymns as a whole excelled the productions of every other poet as much in quality as they did in quantity. Dr. Watts affirmed that "Wrestling Jacob" was worth all the verses he himself had ever written. The Castalian fountain within his heart upwelled its crystal waters to the last. With dying lips, as we have seen, he sang new songs to Christ; and that which age could not diminish death surely could not destroy,—in heaven his harp is now attuned to higher minstrelsy.

Wesley was in Bristol again in the following September. He was now more than eighty-five years old, and the infirmities of age were creeping upon him, but he was slow to acknowledge it. On Saturday, Sept. 6th, he walked from Bristol to Hanham and back, "but my friends" he says, somewhat sarcastically, half offended at their considerateness, "more

* See Rev. John Kirk's Lecture on Charles Wesley.

kind than wise, would scarce suffer it. It seemed so sad a thing to walk five or six miles! I am ashamed, that a Methodist Preacher in tolerable health, should make any difficulty of this." On the following day he preached three times—in the morning at the Broadmead Chapel, in the afternoon at Kingswood, and in the evening in Caroline Court, to an immense number of people, on Romans viii. 33-34. The second Sunday he spent in Bath, where he says, "I had much liberty of spirit the first time I preached, but greater at half-past two, and the greatest of all in the evening, when I vehemently enforced those awful words,—‘Why will ye die, O house of Israel.’" The rest of the week was spent in meeting the Bristol classes; in preaching "to the poor people in George Street," in "meeting the trustees for the new room, who were all willing to add a codicil to the Deed of Trust, in order to ascertain to the Conference" after his death, "the sole right of appointing the preachers in it;" and in other laborious work. On Sunday the 21st he preached twice in the Broadmead Chapel, and once in Temple Church, concluding the day with adjusting the several affairs of the Society. Thus, the grand old man still exerted his utmost strength, and so far from becoming morose or insensible to external things, as the last sands of life fell out, he delighted in the sunny scenes of nature and in social intercourse with friends. On Wednesday the 24th he wandered with great delight among the grottos and terraces and flower-fringed paths of "Miss Goldney's garden, at Clifton," and three days later he went with some friends to another pic-nic at Blaize Castle; and from thence to Lord Clifford's seat, where the pleasure he experienced in examining the paintings was only exceeded by the pleasure excited by the landscape which on every side dispread itself to view. Wesley finished his visit to

Bristol by holding a fast day on Sunday, September 26th, followed by a solemn watch-night, which was brought to a close by singing "Ye virgin souls arise," to the accompaniment of the "Gloucestershire band of music:"—"such a concert," he says, "was never heard in that house before, and perhaps never will again."

On Sunday, March 1st, 1789, Wesley preached twice in City Road, and at seven the same evening left in the mail coach for his annual spring visit to the West. The season was winterly, and the roads were bad, but having three of his itinerants with him, they "spent a comfortable night, partly in sound sleep and partly in singing praise to God." His time in Bristol and its neighbourhood was spent much in the usual way, the only noticeable incident being his preaching a thanksgiving sermon in the Broadmead Chapel, on Thursday, March 12th, the great day of national rejoicing for the recovery from serious sickness of his Majesty King George the third.

In the succeeding September he found all things "in a flourishing state," and continued his journey through Taunton, Exeter, and Plymouth to Cornwall. In that county "the old man eloquent," preached in eleven days approaching twenty sermons—once at Gwennap pit, "to more than five-and-twenty thousand." From Cornwall he returned to Bristol, where, on Sunday, September 6th, he read prayers, preached twice, and administered the Sacrament to several hundred communicants. The effort, however, was almost too much for his now fast failing strength. During the week the autumn fair was held, and the country visitors crowded the preaching rooms. On Thursday he went over to Thornbury, where, "a few men of substance" had "built a neat and commodious preaching house." On Sunday the 13th, he preached three times, and on the following day "spent an agreeable hour with Mr.

Ireland and Mr. Romaine at Brislington.” On Tuesday he preached at Pensford, “to an uncommon congregation, and with an uncommon blessing.” On Wednesday he held forth at Midsomer Norton, and the same evening to “our honest earnest colliers at Coleford.” On Thursday he preached at Frome; on Friday noon, at Trowbridge; and in the evening to “our old steady congregation at Bradford.” On Sunday morning and afternoon he preached in Bath, and in the evening he returned to Bristol. He spent the week in visiting the Society, and the following Sunday he preached morning and evening in the Broadmead Room, and in the afternoon at Temple Church. He again found his Sunday work too heavy for his patriarchal age, and made the wise resolve not to attempt to preach again “more than twice a day.” On Monday he warned the Society against worldliness. On Friday he held a solemn watch-night at Kingswood, concluding his Bristol visit on Sunday, by enforcing in the Broadmead Room the solemn words: “Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways.” Thus did the holy octogenarian fill up his fast fleeting hours—thus could he sing as he hastened on his way:—

“My remnant of days
I spend to His praise,
Who died the whole world to redeem :
Be they many or few,
My days are His due,
And they all are devoted to him.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

"HE FELL ASLEEP."

Adam Clarke in Bristol—"A Good Old Age—Strangers' Friend Society—Conference of 1790—Appointment of Missionary and Chapel Committees—Henry Crabbe Robinson—Last Labours—Sickness and Death.

BRISTOL in 1789-90 was favoured with the ministry of Adam Clarke. He had been invited to Leeds, but preaching during the sittings of the Conference in that town, he casually omitted to pray for the king. Reminded of his failure, he sought to repair it in the evening by supplicating for his Majesty, "saving, sanctifying grace." So incensed were some of the leading ladies of the congregation at the democratic principles which assumed that the king needed a Saviour in common with other sinners, that they signed a remonstrance against his appointment, and succeeded in carrying their point. The loss of Leeds was Bristol's gain. In concert with his colleagues he threw his whole heart into his labours, and a revival ensued, which resulted in a considerable augmentation of the Society.

Seventeen-hundred-and-ninety dawned upon the world, and found Wesley swiftly coursing toward the grave. Constrained at last by daily increasing infirmities, he confessed in the opening entry of his Journal of the year :—"I am now

an old man, decayed from head to foot; my eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much; my mouth is hot and dry every morning; I have a lingering fever almost every day; my movements are weak and slow. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labour; I can preach and write still."

It was a period of great unsettledness among the nations of the earth. Democracy was rampant, and dark clouds were gathering soon to burst in the red-ruin, the murder-madness of the French revolution. Men's hearts were failing them, but the venerable herald of the cross had already reached the Beulah land—he lived above the storm. In sooth he still grasped his warrior's weapons, but his warfare was spiritual, opposed not to Cæsar's but to Satan's reign. Writing to the preacher of the St. Austell circuit early in the year he said—like some war-scarred chieftain leading on his troops—"Come let us have a few more strokes at Satan's kingdom and then we shall depart in peace." His labours were continued from day to day, but already he heard voices from the unseen calling him, and he made ready to depart. On Tuesday, Feb. 16th, he writes, "I retired to Balham for a few days in order to finish my sermons and put all my little things in order." The following Sunday he preached to the children in City Road—the aged pilgrim soon to lay down the palmer's staff spake simple words which children love to hear, to those who with unwearied steps and hopeful hearts had just commenced life's pilgrimage. In March he moved on to Bristol, where by the earnest efforts of Adam Clarke and his coadjutors he "found a people ready prepared for the Lord." During the week he assisted the circuit preachers in their heavy toil of class visitation, and preached every night. On Sunday, March 14th, "he met the Stranger's Society, instituted wholly for the relief, not of our Society, but for poor, sick, friendless strangers." This

Society, now so widely and worthily known, was originated some time before in London, by Mr. John Gardner, a retired soldier, who persuaded a number of his friends to join him in a penny a week subscription for the suffering poor.

From Bristol, Wesley proceeded through the midland and northern counties into Scotland, discoursing, with few exceptions, every night. The infirmities of age were now so evident that at Bradshaw the congregation seeing him totter up the pulpit stairs were deeply moved, and burst into a flood of tears. But though his strength was fast failing him he was reluctant to succumb, and still held with a tenacious hand the authority he had so long and wisely wielded. Stationing and Chapel Committees—these, colossal and cumbersome as they now are, were then all concentrated in one sovereign will against whose decision but few were brave enough to utter an appeal. How absolute the spirit embodied in the following entry:—"Monday 7.—I transcribed the Stations of the Preachers. Tuesday, 8. I wrote a form for settling the preaching-houses, without any superfluous words, which shall be used for the time to come, verbatim, for all the houses to which I contribute anything. I will no more encourage that villainous tautology of lawyers, which is the scandal of our nation."

The forty-seventh Conference began in Bristol July 27th, 1790. Wesley, of course, presided, but, physically, appeared almost unfit. Charles Atmore, who was present, says, "Mr. Wesley appeared very feeble; his eyesight had failed so much that he could not see to give out the hymns. Yet his voice was strong, his spirit remarkably lively, and the powers of his mind and his love towards his fellow creatures were as bright and ardent as ever." The number of members in Great Britain was reported as 76,968; the number in the

Bristol circuit as 1,841, being about 350 in advance of the preceding Bristol Conference. The usual routine business was carefully gone through, and important legislative measures passed. Aaron was already on mount Hor, and must put on others the robes of his authority: Wesley was about to enter into rest; it was meet, therefore, that provision should finally be made for prosecuting the good work when he had passed away. Hitherto, as we have seen, he had embodied all authority in himself; but at this Conference a Committee was appointed for the management of the West Indian missions; two Chapel Committees also,—one for England and one for Ireland. The Chapel Committee being appointed, the following rules were prescribed for its observance:—

"1.—Everything relative to the building or repairing of preaching houses to be referred to them.

"2.—No house shall be undertaken without the consent of the majority of them; and not a stone laid, till the house is settled after the Methodist form, verbatim.—N.B. No lawyer is to alter one line, neither need one be employed.

"3.—No building is to be undertaken till an estimate of the expense is made, and two-thirds of the money raised or subscribed.

"4.—Every preaching house equal to or less than the Bath house, is to be built in the same form without and within.

"5.—Every house larger than the Bath house is to be built on the plan of the new chapel in London, both within and without.

"N.B. 1.—No Preacher shall preach three times the same day to the same congregation. 2.—No Preacher shall preach twice on a week day, or oftener than three times on the Lord's day. 3.—No Preacher shall in future leave the Conference before the conclusion of it, without consent publicly obtained in the Conference."

The Conference business over, its venerable head—who for seventy years had directed its deliberations—attached his signature. The autograph—preserved now as a precious relic—too clearly indicates that his eyes were dim, and that his hand had forgot its cunning.

On Friday, August 27th, Wesley returned to Bristol, and remained in the neighbourhood a month. On Sunday, the 29th, he preached in the Broadmead Chapel, but having no one to help him, “was obliged to shorten the service, which brought the prayers, sermon, and Lord’s supper within the compass of three hours.” On the same day he “preached in the afternoon near King’s Square, and the hearts of the people bowed down before the Lord.” Devoting his attention chiefly to the Bristol Society, he also paid—for the last time—visits to Ditchet, Castle Cary, Shepton Mallet, Pensford, Bath and Thornbury. On Saturday, September 27th, he left the city which had witnessed so many of his toils and triumphs, and he never saw it more! Six months later he purposed paying another visit to the west, and to that end took seats for himself and companion in the mail coach, having sent his chaise on before him; but on the very day of his intended leaving he reached “the bourne from whence no traveller returns.”

“It is difficult,” says Madame de Staël, “to grow old gracefully;” but those who were permitted to gaze on Wesley in his last days beheld a picture, the bright vision of which haunted them through life. His “May of life” had long “fallen into the sear and yellow leaf;” nature in him stood on “the very verge of her confine;” but fourscore years and eight had made no furrows in his heart; and around him, as he moved from places on his way to the metropolis, there gathered all “that which should accompany old age—as honour, love,

obedience, troops of friends.” “It was, I believe,” says Henry Crabbe Robinson in his “Reminiscences,” “more than half a century later, in October 1790, that I heard John Wesley in the great round meeting-house at Colchester. He stood in a wide pulpit, and on each side of him stood a minister, and the two held him up, having their hands under his armpits. His feeble voice was barely audible; but his reverend countenance, especially his long white locks, formed a picture never to be forgotten. There was a vast crowd of lovers and admirers. It was for the most part a pantomime, but the pantomime went to the heart. Of the kind, I never saw anything comparable to it in after life.”

From Colchester he continued his journey to Norwich, where, on the Sunday, he “found no preaching in the thirty-six churches of the city, save the Cathedral and St. Peter’s; and from thence in an open chaise through “mizzling rain” to Lynn, where he arrived “chilled from head to foot.” The following Sunday, having returned to London, he made his last entry in his Journal.—“Sunday 24th, I explained to a numerous congregation in Spitalfields church, “the whole armour of God.” St. Paul’s, Shadwell, was still more crowded in the afternoon, while I enforced that important truth, ‘One thing is needful; and I hope many, even then, resolved to choose the better part.’”

But though his Journal ends—his hand too tremulous to record his latest movements—he still exerted to the utmost his swiftly waning strength. Mr. Ireland, of Brislington, hearing of his state of health sent him a case of claret, but at the “White Swan” it was seized for some reason by the custom house authorities and never reached its destination.

On Thursday, February 17th, the message came. He

discoursed at Lambeth, and returned feverish with cold. The following Sunday he rose as usual at four o'clock, but could not take any public work. On Wednesday he finished his earthly ministry by preaching at Leatherhead. For more than half a century his voice, like a clarion blast, had echoed through the land—upwards of two and forty thousand times had he preached with no uncertain sound; and still faithful to his earliest allegiance to the truth, he cried at Leatherhead, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while he is near."

He then went home to die. Loving friends assembled around him, and fully realized that "the chamber where the good man meets his fate is privileged beyond the common walks of life close on the verge of heaven." "I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me;" "There is no way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus;" "He is all! He is all! I will go!" "The clouds drop fatness;" "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge;" "The best of all is God is with us;"—such were some of the broken but exultant ejaculations which fell from his dying lips. Already he heard the strains of heavenly minstrelsy; and, filled with joy, from time to time his spirit trembled into song:—

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers."

Mrs. Charles Wesley, his brother's widow, having placed some refreshment to his lips, he gratefully repeated his usual thanksgiving after meals,—“We thank Thee, O Lord, for these and all thy mercies. Bless the Church and King, and grant us truth and peace through Jesus Christ, our Lord, for ever and ever.”

His last earthly morning dawned and the celestial city was full in view. Around his bed his friends and faithful followers,

eleven in all, stood or knelt in silent supplication. "Farewell!" he cried as he turned his benignant eye from heaven towards the watching sorrowing ones—Farewell! and then—as Joseph Bradford, in the spirit of the royal bard exclaimed, "Lift up your head, O ye gates; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors and this heir of Glory shall come in,"—Wesley, without a groan and without a sigh, gathered up his feet and died.

Seven days later, on Wednesday, the 9th day of March, they laid him down to rest.

To prevent the inconvenience arising from too great a crowd they interred him at the early hour of five a.m., but hundreds were there to pour out the tribute of their tears. "They buried his body in peace, but HIS NAME SHALL LIVE FOR EVER."

His character needs no higher eulogium than that already afforded by the preceding pages. His works shall praise him, our pen is inadequate thereto. The funeral threnody of Fresenius over Albert Bengel aptly expresses the emotions with which we finish our tribute to his memory and ministry in the west.*

"A pillar falls; a light expires; a star, which shone so brightly in the visible heaven of the church, stops its course, withdraws, and mingles with the supernal glory of the spirits made perfect.

An angel of peace, who was as pious as he was laborious; as childlike as he was learned; as rich in spirit as he was acute in mind; as humble as he was great.

A friend of God expires, whom the Eternal Wisdom led into her chambers; to whom were opened the outgoings of that light which enlightens human minds, the powers of that word

* Etheridge's Life of Clarke, p. 415.

which quickens souls, the treasures of that grace which allures, leads, and saves us.

He was eyes to the blind, a leader to the weak, a pattern to the strong, a luminary to the learned, an ornament to the church.

"A treasury is closed, in which the Lord of all the treasures of grace hath laid up wondrous wealth of knowledge and wisdom. A teacher, mighty in the Scriptures, is no more.

"SIGH, CHILDREN, YOUR FATHERS FALL
ASLEEP."



APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

“Bristol Methodism originated the Class Meeting.” (p. 29.)

From original information very recently published by the Moravians, it appears that a class for Christian fellowship existed in Bristol before this time, but as no mention is made of it in Wesley's Journal, it is probable that its existence was of very short duration, and moreover, it was never, strictly speaking, a *Methodist* class,—Wesley not having at that time left the Moravian community.—The following extract is from *The Messenger*, a Moravian serial:—

“In a letter, dated, Bristol, April 9th, 1739, Wesley says:—“About seven in the evening, three women, who desired only to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified—*Mrs. Norman, Mrs. Greville and Mrs. Panon*,—agreed to meet together once a week, to confess their faults to one another, and to pray one for another that they may be healed. And *Mrs. Panon* desired she might propose their design to her two sisters, and offer them the liberty of joining with them. At eight, *Samuel Wathen, Surgeon; Richard Cross, Upholsterer; Charles Bonner, Distiller; and Thomas Westell, Carpenter*, met and agreed to do the same; who also desired they might make the offer of joining with them to three or four of their acquaintance. If this work be not of God, let it come to naught. If it be, who can hinder it.”—*Methodist Magazine, July, 1877, p. 512.*

APPENDIX B.

“Weavers’ Hall.” (page 37.)

“In Temple Street stood the Weavers’ Hall, of which some remains still exist; and beneath it is the hospital or almshouse for four poor women, which has long been tenantless; and at the east end where Divine service was once performed, all is now totally silent and deserted. The hall has been successfully used as a Wesleyan chapel, a Jews’ Synagogue, and a charity school; for the latter purpose it is still occupied.—*Pryce’s History of Bristol*, p. 65.

APPENDIX C.

“Michael Fenwick recommended to return to business.”

(Page 52.)

It does not appear, however, that Michael Fenwick listened to this advice. For many years after this he continued in the itinerancy and did good honest work. He was earnest albeit somewhat quaint. He expressed a wish to be immortalized by being mentioned in Wesley’s journal. Wesley gratified his wish, but in a manner scarcely flattering to his vanity. Thus he writes:—“July 25, 1757.—I preached at Cleyworth. I think none was unmoved but Michael Fenwick, who fell fast asleep under an adjoining hayrick.”

Rev. Luke Tyreman in his *Life of Wesley* tells the following anecdote: “Their old chapel in New Acres had been converted into cottages; and in 1776, they had built another in Ridgway Gates, though not without a united and great effort. The Rev. Mr. Fowles, a clergyman, had the management of a sandbed from which they had to obtain their sand; and hearing of their intentions, he announced, that, after the expiration of five days the sand would be charged half-a-crown a load. This, to the poor Methodists, was a serious matter; but George Escrick was a man of too much energy to be easily defeated. Accordingly, he, at once, requested all the Methodists, young and old, strong and feeble, active and

otherwise, to repair with him to the sandpit, and to dig and convey away all the sand they needed. To a man, they obeyed George's injunction, and, in a single day, got as much as their intended chapel was likely to require. Michael Fenwick was then their preacher, and kept running over the half-a-mile distance, between the site of the new chapel, and the clerical sandbed, encouraging the people in their task, and at one time, wanting to sing the hymn beginning with "Before Jehovah's awful throne"; but blunt George Escrick, the weaver, imperatively stopped his spiritual superior, telling him to take a spade in his hand, for there was a time for all things, and this was a time to dig."

APPENDIX D.

"French prisoners." (page 53.)

"During the war now concluded, there was a dépôt for French prisoners at Knowle, juxta Totterdown and Pile Hill. A short time previous to the peace, one of the soldiers, on his return from guard, for a wager, with a single ball struck the weather-cock of St. Mary Redcliffe tower. About nine years afterwards the cock ceased to traverse, and on examination it proved that the gun-shot-wound had opened a passage for the rain, which corroded the spindle."—*Evans's Chronological Outlines of Bristol*, p. 282.

APPENDIX E.

"The Earl of Ferrers." (page 53.)

"The Earl of Ferrers, an infidel, had murdered his steward. The House of Lords condemned the wretched nobleman; he was to be executed and his body dissected. His brother and the Countess of Huntingdon, assisted by their Methodist associates, sought in vain to arouse him to a sense of the moral peril of his condition. They visited him and prayed with him in prison; and supplications were offered for

him in many of the Methodist chapels. But he seemed incapable of reflecting upon his appalling fate. He spent the evenings of his imprisonment in playing at piquet; he demanded intoxicating drinks; the night before his execution he made one of his keepers read Hamlet while he was in bed, and half an hour before he was carried to the gallows he was employed in correcting verses which he had composed in the Tower. Dressed in his wedding clothes, decked with silver embroidery, he rode to the gallows in his carriage drawn by six horses, and accompanied by troops, and a hearse and six which was to convey his corpse to the Surgeons' Hall. He died without penitence, and apparently without fear."—*Stevens's History of Methodism II., p. 20.*

APPENDIX F.

Captain Webb.—“ His body lies interred.”

The following epitaph appears on a neat tablet in Portland Wesleyan Chapel :—

“ Sacred to the Memory of
 Thomas Webb, Esq.,
 Lieutenant in the 48th Regiment of Foot,
 Who died the 20th December, 1796,
 Aged 72,
 And whose remains are interred in the recess.
 As a Soldier
 he was brave—active—courageous,
 and lost an eye at the siege of Louisbourg, 1758.
 When afterwards enlisted under the banner of Christ,
 As a Christian,
 he was exemplary
 for simplicity and godly sincerity.

As a Preacher,
 he was faithful—zealous—successful,
 both in Great Britain and America.

In the latter he founded
 the first Methodist Churches,
 and was
 the principal Instrument
 In erecting this
 Chapel.”

APPENDIX G.

“ St. Werburgh and St. Ewen’s Churches.”

This Church, situated in Corn Street, is dedicated to St. Werburga,—supposed to be the daughter of Wulferus, King of Mercia. No satisfactory information has been conveyed to our times respecting the building of the original structure, although a church of some kind must have existed there in the reign of Edward II.; for we find it was confirmed to the Priory of Keynsham by that monarch for its better support. The tower may be referred to about the year 1400, but the body of the church was partly rebuilt in 1760.

St. Ewen’s Church stood on the site of the present Council House in Corn Street. It was built in the reign of Richard II., and taken down in 1778.

APPENDIX H.

“ Gordon Riots.” (page 97.)

“ While Johnson was thus engaged, the tranquillity of the metropolis of Great Britain was unexpectedly disturbed by the most horrid series of outrage that ever disgraced a civilized country. A relaxation of some of

the severe penal provisions against the Catholic communion had been granted by the legislature, but a dark and malignant spirit of persecution soon shewed itself, in an unworthy petition for the repeal of the wise and humane statute. That petition was brought forward by a mob, with the evident purpose of intimidation, and was justly rejected. But the attempt was accompanied and followed by such daring violence as is unexampled in history. Of this extraordinary tumult, Dr. Johnson has given the following concise, lively, and just account in his "Letters to Mrs. Thrale :"

"On Friday, the good Protestants met in St. George's Fields, at the summons of Lord George Gordon, and marching to Westminster, insulted the Lords and Commons. At night, the outrages began by the demolition of the mass-house by Lincoln's-Inn.

"On Tuesday night they pulled down Fielding's house, and burnt his goods in the street. They had gutted on Monday Sir George Savile's house, but the building was saved. On Tuesday evening, leaving Fielding's ruins, they went to Newgate to demand their companions, who had been seized demolishing the chapel. The keeper could not release them but by the Mayor's permission, which he went to ask ; at his return, he found all the prisoners released, and Newgate in a blaze. They then went to Bloomsbury, and fastened upon Lord Mansfield's house, which they pulled down ; and as for his goods, they totally burnt them. They have since gone to Cæn-wood, but a guard was there before them. They plundered some Papists, I think, and burnt a mass-house in Moorfields the same night.

"On Wednesday they broke open the Fleet, and the King's Bench, and the Marshalsea, and Wood Street Compter, and Clerkenwell Bridewell, and released all the prisoners.

"At night they set fire to the Fleet, and to the King's Bench, and I know not how many other places ; and one might see the glare of conflagration fill the sky from many parts. The sight was dreadful.

"The soldiers were sent out to different parts, and the town is now at quiet.

"June 9th.—The soldiers are stationed so as to be everywhere within call : there is no longer any body of rioters, and the individuals are hunted to their holes, and led to prison. Lord George was last night sent to the Tower.

APPENDIX I.

“Concert of my Nephews.” (page 101.)

“At this period, his nephews, Charles and Samuel Wesley, were attracting great attention by their musical performances. They had won the friendship of the great musical composers, Dr. Boyce, Dr. Nares, and Dr. Burney. Lords Le Despencer, Barrington, Aylesford, Dudley, and others, were enraptured with them. The Earl of Mornington, for some years, breakfasted weekly with them. Dr. Howard, the distinguished organist, declared concerning Samuel, that he seemed to have ‘dropped down from heaven.’ Charles was introduced to George III., with whom he became a great favourite. The result of this unparalleled popularity was the institution, in Wesley’s brother’s house, of a series of select concerts, which were continued for several years.”—*Tyerman’s Life and Times of Wesley*.

Myrmann's Life & Times of
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being acknowledged - This is
not honest; but it is common
with a certain class of
~~people~~ authors -

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